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A Case Study of Mastery Learning Activities in Kindergarten Literacy Centers

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Crystal Cowen

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Walden University
2015

Abstract

A Case Study of Mastery Learning Activities in Kindergarten Literacy Centers

by

Crystal B. Cowen

MA, Walden University, 2010

BS, Elizabeth City State University, 1994

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

December 2015

Abstract

This case study examined the problem of below-grade-level reading scores among kindergarten students despite the use of literacy centers in a large Title 1 public elementary school in a suburb of Atlanta, Georgia. The purpose of the study was to investigate whether application of the literacy center model might be connected to student performance. Specifically, the research question concerned whether implementation of literacy centers was consistent with principles of mastery learning based on differentiation by ability. This study was guided by Bloom's theory of mastery learning, which suggests that higher levels of learning may be achieved if each child is allowed to work at his or her own pace and academic level. The study documented literacy center activities over a 5-month period. Data sources included classroom observations within 11 kindergarten classrooms, interviews with 11 kindergarten teachers, and reviews of student assessments. Descriptive coding, category construction, and the constant comparison method were used to analyze the data. The findings revealed that although many components of mastery learning were evident, the frequent dependence upon subjective assessments and inappropriate task assignment for low-achieving students were not aligned. To improve classroom practices and achieve greater alignment, an in-service professional development project based on a training model by Sparks and Loucks-Horsley was developed, with attention to incorporating research-based classroom activities for low-achieving kindergarten students into the literacy center organization. Combating reading difficulties in the early school years offers educational and social advantages, such as later reading achievement, improved school completion rates, lower incarceration rates, and less dependence upon low-paying jobs.

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Dedication

This doctoral project study is dedicated to my wonderful and supportive family: my husband, Henry; my son, Cameron; and my daughter, Hailey. Thank you for supporting and inspiring me to continue the journey at times when I was deeply frustrated and ready to give up. The encouragement and belief from you all that I could do it kept me moving forward toward a major goal in my life. It was through my family that I realized no dream is too big, no goal unattainable, and no challenge too difficult. I love you all!

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Section 1: The Problem

Introduction

Research indicates that reading achievement in the early grades is enhanced when reading instruction is differentiated by ability (Connor, Jakobsons, Corwe, & Meadows, 2009; Connor et al., 2009; Davis, 2010; Tobin & McInnes, 2008). This project study was used to investigate the extent to which a low-income, high-minority Atlanta school has effectively, per best practices, implemented a classroom organization approach intended to differentiate reading instruction by ability in kindergarten classrooms. The local problem I addressed through this study is a high proportion of below-grade reading scores at the completion of kindergarten. The study may enrich curriculum planning and teacher in-service education at the project site by identifying factors that either contribute to or detract from successful implementation of differentiated reading instruction.

The specific classroom organization used at the project site to differentiate reading instruction is the literacy workshop (Bukowiecki, 2007; Frey, Lee, Massengill, Pass, & Tollefson, 2005; Linder, 2009). This approach includes whole-group minilessons, small-group guided reading lessons, and literacy centers, which are composed of small-group and independent learning activities. Literacy centers are small work stations within the classroom where students work alone or in small groups while the teacher provides small-group guided reading instruction to other students (Stout, 2009). This study was used to focus on literacy centers because these are areas in which students work independently of the teacher in a manner that, if implemented correctly, can promote individual skill development while building motivation and a spirit of

collaboration among groups of students (Maurer, 2010; Morrow, 1997; Peterson & Davis, 2008).

The study is presented in four sections with an appendix. In Section 1, I define the problem, provide evidence for the problem, define the research question, and review the literature related to the problem. In Section 2, I identify the methodology to be used to investigate the research question, including research design, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis. Section 2 also contains presentation and discussion of the research findings. Section 3 contains a description of an original project informed by the research findings. Section 4 contains my reflections on the project's strengths and limitations in addressing the problem. The appendix includes the actual project as delivered to the staff at the project site.

Definition of the Problem

The local problem this study addressed is a high proportion of below-grade reading scores at the completion of kindergarten at a Georgia public elementary school. This Title 1 school resides in a suburb of Atlanta and serves approximately 1,700 students. The kindergarten grade consists of 12 classes with an average of 25 students. The school's student population is very diverse and includes Caucasians (29%), African Americans (31%), Hispanics (26%), Asians (10%), and other groups (4%; Peachtree Elementary School, 2012-2013). In addition, 35% of the school population and 44% of the kindergarten population are English language learners (ELL; Peachtree Elementary School, 2012-2013) who are screened at the beginning and middle of the school year for vocabulary knowledge and subsequent growth. This ELL population is served through supplementary instruction in a small group pull-out setting 2-3 times a week for 30

minutes by support personnel who have been specially trained in how to best meet the ELLs' vocabulary needs.

The existence of the local problem can be substantiated by local and state-mandated data. Local data are based on running records to place students on reading levels at the beginning, middle, and end of the school year (Peachtree Elementary School Profile Sheet Data, 2012-2013). State-mandated data are collected through a year-long performance-based assessment called Georgia Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (GKIDS) that is aligned with the Common Core Georgia Standards (CCGPS) for kindergarten (Peachtree Elementary School GKIDS, 2012-2013). Overall, both local and state-mandated assessments indicate that many students struggle to master literacy skills throughout and are performing below grade level at the completion of kindergarten (see "Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level" section below).

The local problem of low reading scores is related to a larger national problem, as evidence has been accumulating for a number of years that many of America's school children are not mastering essential reading skills (National Reading Panel [NRP], 2000). The National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES, 2011) suggests that reading problems affect students in virtually every social, cultural, and ethnic group. Furthermore, research shows that children and young adults alike are spending less time reading and that eroding reading comprehension skills are the result (Office of Research and Analysis, National Endowment for the Arts, 2007).

To address the problem at the project site, Peachtree Elementary kindergarten teachers implement a daily literacy workshop approach. The workshop approach is mandated by the school district as a means to meet a variety of student needs. This

approach includes whole-group minilessons, small-group guided reading lessons, and literacy centers that are composed of small-group and independent learning activities. Whole-group minilessons focus on skills such as letter recognition, letter sound association, and sight word identification. Small-group guided reading lessons emphasize reading skills such as comprehension and fluency, with students grouped by reading level. Although time spent engaged in the literacy workshop varies, direct, explicit instruction is typically 30-45 minutes long, while student engagement in independent reading and writing behaviors/activities accounts for 45-60 minutes daily. The workshop approach promotes learning through a student-centered approach, focusing on the varied needs of all learners. Although reading coaches are available at varied times of the day, supervision and monitoring of literacy workshop practices do not exist. Literacy centers are small workstations within the classroom where students work alone or in small groups while the teacher provides small-group guided reading instruction to other students (Stout, 2009). For example, one literacy center may be designated for phonics, while another may be designated for vocabulary.

Literacy centers are a classroom management system designed to enhance cooperative learning skills while allowing for individual and small-group learning (Falk-Ross, 2008). Literacy centers used within a classroom can provide multiple opportunities for students to engage in meaningful, differentiated literacy activities (Falk-Ross, 2008; O'Donnell & Hitpas, 2010; Reutzel & Clark, 2011; Stout, 2009). As students work independently or in small groups, student collaboration is promoted, student motivation is facilitated, and differentiated learning opportunities are provided based on individual ability levels (Arquette, 2007; Just Read Florida, 2012; Maurer, 2010; Morrow, 1997;

Peterson & Davis, 2008; Tobin & McInnes, 2008). Students are able to practice and increase the development of their literacy skills as they are actively engaged in reading and writing activities either alone or with others of similar ability levels (Morrow, 1997). Placing students at literacy centers according to ability level facilitates multiple opportunities to develop and master reading skills while fostering engagement and motivation to learn as students experience success working at their individual readiness level (Arquette, 2007; Peterson & Davis, 2008; Reutzel & Clark, 2011).

Unfortunately, this workshop approach to teaching literacy is not increasing the number of students who are proficient in literacy skills at the completion of the school year. Further, there have been no local studies to examine the implementation of the workshops to uncover why the workshops have not produced the desired improvement in reading among low achievers. I used this study to focus on literacy centers because these are areas in which students are working independently of the teacher in a manner that, if implemented correctly, can promote individual skill development while building motivation and a spirit of collaboration among groups of students (Maurer, 2010; Morrow, 1997; Peterson & Davis, 2008). Therefore, the purpose of this study was to evaluate the implementation of literacy centers to improve reading skills of kindergarten students in a public elementary school. Specifically, I investigated the extent to which implementation of literacy centers is consistent with the principles of mastery learning based on differentiation by ability.

Rationale

The rationale for this study was based on the premise that all children should be given a quality education. The Equal Education Opportunities Act (U.S. Government,

1974) provides that no child shall be denied an equal educational opportunity on the basis of race, color, sex, or national origin (Legal Information Institute, 2013). The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2002) provides that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). The Early Intervention Program (Georgia Department of Education, 2009) provides additional instructional resources to help students who are performing below grade level in obtaining the necessary academic skills to reach grade-level performance in the shortest possible time (Georgia Department of Education, 2012).

Evidence of the Problem at the Local, State, and National Levels

The study was prompted by grade-level data at the project site that compared beginning, middle, and end-of-year reading scores. Some of the data were derived from kindergarten grade-level profile sheets (Peachtree Elementary School, 2012-2013). A profile sheet lists each child's reading level at the beginning, middle, and end of a school year and provides an analysis of yearly growth. Reading levels are determined by running records that assess a student's reading accuracy and fluency as he or she reads from a benchmark book. Questions are asked to determine comprehension. Although recall and retell questions are used, higher order processes such as making inferences and connections are also included. End-of-year profile sheet data consistently show a high percentage of kindergarten students not reading grade-level text at the completion of school years. Table 1 shows percentages of kindergarten students reading below grade level at the end of the year.

Table 1

Profile Sheet Data—Comparison of Kindergarten Students Reading Below Grade Level—End of Year

| School year | Percentage below grade level |
|-------------|------------------------------|
| 2010/2011 | 15% (41)* |
| 2011/2012 | 17% (52) |
| 2012/2013 | 34% (103) |

Note. * = sample *n*.

Data to substantiate the local problem were also obtained from GKIDS (Georgia Department of Education, 2013), a year-long performance-based assessment, providing information about the level of instructional support needed by each student. As a formative and summative assessment, these data provide quarterly and end-of-year information as to the percentage of children mastering grade-level skills. The state-mandated data is quantitative, utilizing a nominal scale to place students into categories of *not assessed*, *not demonstrated*, *emerging*, *progressing*, *mastered*, and *exceeds mastery* in relation to students' developing skills in English language arts, math, science, social studies, personal/social development, and approaches to learning (GKIDS, 2013). Reading skills assessed include concepts of print, phonological awareness, phonics, reading fluency, vocabulary, and reading comprehension (GKIDS, 2013). Table 2 shows percentages of the kindergarten population at the project site below grade level in reading, reflected by *not demonstrated*, *emerging*, and *progressing*.

Table 2

Georgia Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (GKIDS)—Comparison of Kindergarten Students Reading Below Grade Level—End of Year

| School year | Percentage below grade level |
|-------------|------------------------------|
| 2008/2009 | 25%(68)* |
| 2009/2010 | 25%(68) |
| 2010/2011 | 22%(60) |
| 2011/2012 | 25%(76) |
| 2012/2013 | 32%(97) |

Note. * = sample *n*.

In addition, performance data from the state Criterion Referenced Competency Test (CRCT) indicate that low reading achievement at the kindergarten level continues into first grade (Georgia Department of Education, 2009, 2010). The CRCT is designed to measure how well students acquire the skills and knowledge described in state-mandated content standards. According to CRCT results, in 2009 and 2010, 20 % ($N = 52$) and 16% ($N = 43$) of first graders, respectively, failed to score at the *proficient* level (scores of 800-849) in language arts (Georgia Department of Education).

The local problem of low academic literacy achievement in kindergarten is seen at the state level as well, as GKIDS English/language arts end-of-year summary data (2013) indicate a high percentage of Georgia kindergartners not mastering expected reading skills each year. This trend is seen as 19% ($N = 24,952$) were below grade level in 2009; 17% ($N = 22,441$), ($N = 22,673$), ($N = 23,262$) were below grade level in 2010, 2011, and 2012, respectively; and 21% ($N = 29,905$) were below grade level in 2013 (GKIDS, 2013).

Furthermore, there is evidence that low reading achievement across the state continues into higher grades. According to the NCES (2011), 34% ($N = 43,801$) of the total Georgia fourth-grade population and 26% ($N = 32,947$) of the total eighth-grade population failed to attain a basic level of reading achievement.

Low academic literacy achievement is also part of a more global problem of underachievement across the United States. Based on year-end kindergarten data, Denton, West, and Walston (2003) reported that 30% ($N = 1,247,247$) of students could not identify beginning sounds, 49% ($N = 2,037,171$) could not identify ending sounds, 86% ($N = 3,575,442$) could not read grade-level sight words, and 96% ($N = 3,991,191$) could not read words in text. These deficits in skills continue to be a problem as students progress through school. The National Early Literacy Panel (Lonigan & Shanahan, 2008) reported that 37% ($N = 46,012$) of U.S. fourth graders fail to achieve basic levels of reading achievement. In a more recent report, NCES (2011) showed a decrease to 33% ($N = 41,038$) of fourth graders failing to achieve basic levels of reading, although the number of students performing at or above a proficient level did not change significantly, increasing from 33 to 34% ($N = 42,281$).

Reading problems are even greater within low-income families, ethnic minority groups, and English language learners (Lonigan & Shanahan, 2008), with 49% of Latino and 51% of African American fourth graders reading at a below-basic level (NCES, 2011). Analysis of achievement gaps shows that Black and Hispanic students trailed their White peers by an average of more than 20 test-scale points on the National Assessment for Educational Progress (NCES, 2011) reading assessment at fourth and eighth grades, a difference of about two grade levels. The U.S. Department of Education

(2001) conducted a study on third through fifth grade students from 71 high-poverty schools and found that these students scored below norms in all years and grades tested, and students who lived in poverty scored significantly worse than their peers. These problems continue to be seen through a closer look at some of the background characteristics of lower performing students among fourth graders who scored below the 25th percentile on the 2011 reading assessment, with 74% eligible for free/reduced lunch and 24% English language learners, and among eighth graders, with 67% eligible for free/reduced lunch, 26% Black, and 32% Hispanic (NCES, 2011).

Considering the learning needs of English language learners is important, as non-English-speaking students are the fastest growing student group nationally, with 5 million enrolled now and the number doubling by 2015 (Roekel, 2008). These learners face unique challenges that must be addressed in the early years through improvement of early childhood education (National Task Force on Early Childhood Education, 2007). Kindergarten is the foundation that all future learning endeavors build upon, making it the “most important, most essential and most critical stage of education for children’s development” (Tafa, 2008, p. 168).

Evidence of the Problem From the Professional Literature

Early childhood education plays an important role in literacy development, as learning achieved during the early grades is likely to be maintained throughout the subsequent school years (Shanahan, 2008). Further, reading failure has negative long-term consequences for self-confidence and motivation to learn (Armbruster, Lehr, & Osborn, 2001; Lepola, Salonen, & Vauras, 2000; NRP, 2000). According to the National Association for the Education of Young Children (1998), “one of the best predictors of

whether a child will function competently in school and go on to contribute actively in our increasingly literate society is the level in which the child progresses in reading and writing” (p. 1). Indeed, lack of student proficiency in literacy results in social and economic loss to society through welfare, unemployment, crime, and incarceration (Summer Institute of Linguistics International, 2012).

Reading performance in the early years is a critical component of the experience of becoming a proficient reader (Armbruster et al., 2001; Foster & Miller, 2007; NRA, 2000). Reading difficulties in the early years persist over time, with the likelihood that interventions will be successful diminishing throughout (Coyne, Kame’enui, Simmons, & Harn, 2004; Juel, 1988). For example, Juel (1988) conducted a longitudinal study and reported that 88% of students who were poor readers in first grade continued to be poor readers in fourth grade. Juel found that children who did not develop good word-recognition skills in first grade began to dislike reading and read less than their peers, thus reducing the ability to strengthen reading skills. McNamara, Scissons, and Gutknecht (2011) also demonstrated that reading problems endure throughout childhood, as poor phonological awareness skills in kindergarten contributed to difficulties in word-level reading skills and reading fluency levels in third grade. Similar findings were seen in two longitudinal studies, suggesting that many kindergarten children who performed poorly on phonemic awareness tasks could not read fluently by third grade (Snider, 1997). Difficulties in the area of comprehension are also evident over time as poor readers with slow rates of vocabulary growth are less engaged in leisure time reading, leading to less practice in word reading and comprehension skills (Cain & Oakhill, 2013). Foster and Miller (2007) also found that a comprehension gap increases from first to third

grade in students who struggle with phonics. This gap was attributed to the time needed to master decoding skills.

In addition to the negative effects of early reading difficulty on later reading achievement, it appears that early reading difficulty impacts school completion. For example, in a longitudinal study in Chicago, Lesnick, Goerge, Smithall, and Gwynee (2010) found that nearly 55% of below-level third grade students did not graduate from high school and fewer than 20% enrolled in college. Garnier, Stein, and Jacobs (1997) contended that dropping out of school is a multiple-determined process, with influences beginning in early childhood. Determinants of dropping out included low academic achievement in the early years, leading to lack of motivation and eventual school failure. Similarly, in a study of students from 20 Baltimore schools, Alexander, Entwisle, and Kabbani (2001) found that poor reading scores in first grade continued to affect many high school students, as their motivation to achieve diminished, resulting in poor grades and content area knowledge. Alexander et al. concluded that dropping out of school is the culmination of a long process of disengagement in school. Lloyd (1978) also observed the negative influence of early reading difficulty. Analyzing data from selected third graders who were known to have become high school dropouts or graduates, Lloyd found that certain characteristics were present in each population in the early school years. One characteristic of the dropout group was reading difficulties. It was suggested that this characteristic was present because third grade is the point at which basic reading skills have been taught and therefore future achievement patterns have been set.

Given the relationship between early reading difficulty and later academic failure, it is also likely that early reading difficulty has negative effects on social outcomes. For

instance, students who struggle academically in early elementary school are at an increased risk for problem behaviors in their later school years as academic rigor intensifies (McIntosh, Horner, Chard, Boland, & Good, 2006). Even after leaving school, low reading achievers in the early grades continue to be disadvantaged, as adults with lower levels of literacy and education are more likely than adults with higher levels of literacy and education to be unemployed or to earn an income that falls below the poverty level (Kutner, Greenberg, Boyle, Hus, & Dunleavy, 2007). Further, low reading achievers are also more likely to become incarcerated (Harris, Baltodano, Bal, Jolivet, & Malcahy, 2009; Shippen, Houchins, Crites, Derzis, & Patterson, 2010).

Definitions

Comprehension: Comprehension is understanding what is read (NRP, 2000).

Reading comprehension is the active process of constructing meaning through interaction between text and reader (Durkin, 1993). The reader constructs mental representations of the text, which are used to understand and communicate with others what was read (Pressley & Afflerbach, 1995). In this study, comprehension includes understanding both teacher-read and student-read texts.

Differentiated instruction: Differentiated instruction is a teaching theory based on the premise that instructional practices should vary and be adapted in relation to individual and diverse students in classrooms (Tomlinson, 1999). Differentiated instruction provides individualized or small-group learning opportunities tailored to align with student ability level, interests, or learning modalities.

Fluency: Fluency is the ability to read with speed, accuracy, and appropriate expression and is a preliminary and important component in the ability to comprehend

text (NRP, 2000; Speece & Ritchey, 2005). Many kindergarten students at the project site do not enter kindergarten reading; thus, fluency is typically not measured until midyear. In this study, fluency applies to letter naming and letter sounds, as well as reading of grade-level sight words and texts.

Literacy centers: Literacy centers are a classroom management system designed to enhance cooperative learning skills while allowing for individual and small-group learning (Falk-Ross, 2008). At the kindergarten level, literacy centers are used to enhance phonics, phonemic awareness, fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary skills. In this study, literacy centers are work stations that allow students to focus on these components of reading through a differentiated, ability-level approach.

Literacy workshop: Literacy workshop is a block of time designated during the day to teach and extend literacy. Literacy workshop includes whole-group minilessons, small-group guided reading lessons, and literacy centers. I focused on the literacy centers that are part of the literacy workshop.

Mastery learning theory: Within mastery learning theory, each child is seen as having the ability to achieve higher levels of learning if allowed to work at his or her own pace and academic level (Bloom, 1968). As students attain mastery at their current ability level, they move up to the next level. Mastery is usually defined as a criterion-based level of competence expressed, for example, as a percentage of correct answers or demonstrated skills. Thus, there is an assumption that learning tasks can be organized into a hierarchy of difficulty (Bloom, 1978).

Phonological awareness: Phonological awareness is the ability to detect, manipulate, or analyze components of spoken words (Taub & Szente, 2012).

Phonological awareness consists of the ability to recognize and use rhyme, break words into syllables, blend phonemes into syllables and words, identify beginning and ending sounds, and see smaller words within larger words (Torgesen & Wagner, 1998). In this study, phonological awareness is the ability to distinguish rhyme and blend syllables.

Phonemic awareness: Phonemic awareness is the understanding that words are composed of individual phonemes and the ability to focus on and manipulate these phonemes in words (NRP, 2000; Ukrainetz, Ross, & Harm, 2009). In this study, phonemic awareness is the ability to isolate, blend, and segment individual sounds.

Phonics: Phonics is a system for encoding speech sounds into written symbols (NRP, 2000; Venezky, 1999). Phonics includes teaching letter-sound correspondences and their use in reading and writing (Adams, 1990; Harris & Hodges, 1995). In this study, phonics relates to the ability to link individual letters or letter combinations with appropriate sounds, then blend the sounds to make words.

Reading achievement. In this study, reading achievement is taken to mean the ability to score at a certain level on a measure of certain reading skills. At the kindergarten level, reading achievement may be measured by running records, as well as probes of letter, letter/sound, and sight-word identification. Probes were taken using the *easyCBM* (curriculum-based measurement; Alonzo, Glasgow, Tindal, Ulmer, & Yovanoff, 2006) progress monitoring assessment system.

Vocabulary: Vocabulary refers to orally communicated words or written words in text (NRP, 2000). Vocabulary provides the foundation for learning to decode and comprehend text (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1997; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). In this study, vocabulary refers to the ability to understand and use new words in context

after they are introduced and taught directly from a given text. In this study, vocabulary also refers to the ability to identify grade-level sight words.

Significance

Educational Significance

This study may be significant in contributing to the knowledge of teachers and administrators at the project site as to the effectiveness of kindergarten literacy centers. Such knowledge may influence teachers to alter or improve instructional approaches to better meet individual student needs. Such knowledge may influence administrators to consider retention, adaptation, or discontinuation of school-wide curricular practices. Furthermore, administrators may find this information useful in planning professional development opportunities that focus on developmentally appropriate practices that address students' readiness levels.

Contributions of this study could be shared within the school district and at the state level. Results obtained from this study could provide an effective plan for district- and statewide improvement in student growth and achievement in reading. If a goal of the district and state is to continuously make gains in reading, along with other core subjects, effective approaches and strategies to increase student achievement need to be implemented.

Social Change Significance

This study may be significant in contributing to social change by providing kindergarten students with better opportunities to attain grade-level achievement in reading. As early reading achievement is a predictor of later reading achievement (Cain & Oakhill, 2013; Juel, 1988; McNamara et al., 2011; Snider, 1997), the foundations

established in kindergarten may lead to eventual success in school and in the workplace. Improved reading skills are connected with a larger selection of employment opportunities (Kungu & Machtmes, 2009), with proficient readers obtaining higher paid jobs in management, business, and professional sectors. Preparation for a society that demands high standards of knowledge produces positive economic changes in communities as more individuals make positive contributions (Kellett, 2009).

Research Question

While the research literature has provided important findings regarding the benefits of grouping students by ability level, less is known about the effectiveness of this approach in kindergarten literacy centers. This project study was intended to discover whether low reading scores at the project site might be related to the implementation of literacy centers. To the extent that the principles of mastery learning and/or differentiation by ability were not evidenced, perhaps student performance could be explained. Therefore, I used this study to address the following research question: Is the implementation of literacy centers at the project site consistent with the principles of mastery learning based on differentiation by ability?

More specifically, I investigated the following:

1. How are children assigned to learning tasks at the literacy centers?
2. How is student progress at the literacy centers assessed?
3. What decision rules are in place to determine when children are ready to progress to more advanced learning activities?

Review of the Literature

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study was based on the mastery learning theory developed by Bloom. Within mastery learning theory, each child is regarded as having the ability to achieve higher levels of learning if allowed to work at his or her own pace and academic level (Bloom, 1968). Each child demonstrates mastery of the necessary knowledge and skills for each learning task before moving on to the next skill (Bloom, 1978). According to Slavin (1987), “If instruction is directed toward ensuring that nearly all students learn each skill in a hierarchical sequence, then students will have the prerequisite skills necessary to enable them to learn the later skills” (p. 177). Using assessment, feedback to students, and corrective individualized help, mastery learning “gives teachers a practical means to vary and differentiate their instruction in order to better meet students’ individual learning needs” (Guskey, 2007, p. 13). Classrooms in which mastery learning occurs diminish individual differences in students’ achievement by ensuring that all students have mastered prerequisite skills, reducing the amount of time needed for corrective instruction and activities (Block, 1972; Bloom, 1968; Guskey & Gates, 1986). Students are engaged in groups where they learn cooperatively with each other as well as individual settings in which they work independently (Block, 1980). Mastery learning promotes the acquisition of intellectual, manual, and emotional competencies that foster the desire to undertake lifelong learning (Block, 1980).

Mastery learning also capitalizes on the usage of enrichment or extension activities for those who need more challenging opportunities (Guskey, 2007). Bloom (1978) believed that enrichment activities provided these students with exciting

opportunities to extend and broaden their learning. Enrichment activities are rewarding to students who need to be appropriately challenged.

Mastery learning is attributed to the behaviorist theory known as *operant conditioning*, which indicates that learning occurs when a connection is made between a stimulus and response (Skinner, 1984). In line with behaviorist theory, mastery learning focuses on open behaviors that can be observed and measured (Moore, 2011). The material that will be taught to mastery is broken down into small lessons that follow a logical sequence. The student responds and shows evidence of understanding the skill before moving on (Bloom, 1968; Guskey, 2007).

Despite its long history in contemporary pedagogy, mastery learning is not without its critics. For example, Arlin (1982) asserts that in the mastery learning approach, learning is held constant while instructional time is allowed to vary, slowing the pace for high achievers to increase it for low achievers. Similarly, Gage and Berliner (1988) and Mueller (1976) argued that mastery learning may limit learning opportunities for advanced students. However, it should be noted that implementing the mastery learning approach allows multiple opportunities for high achievers to be appropriately challenged through individual and small-group settings while low achievers are given time needed to master basic skills. Other critics believe that mastery learning promotes a lack of peer interaction, with a focus on whole-group instruction and subsequent individual-based corrective feedback (Slavin, 1987). However, the lack of peer interaction seems to be a fault more of the specific implementation than of the theory itself, which does not discourage peer interaction. Indeed, Bloom's original learning for mastery model presumed group-based instruction with peer cooperation (Block & Burns,

1976). Only those implementations of mastery learning theory that follow a fully individualized or programmed learning model (e.g., Keller & Sherman, 1974; Talmage, 1975) are subject to criticism of reduced peer interaction.

Mastery learning theory suggests that learning can be improved when students receive assessments to identify the skills they do not possess and then engage in activities that reinforce and promote mastery (Bloom, 1978). Block and Burns's (1976) review of 40 studies of student outcomes under mastery and nonmastery approaches to instruction indicated that mastery-taught students learn more effectively, learn more efficiently, and enjoy learning more than their counterparts. Similarly, Guskey and Gates's (1986) meta-analysis of 27 studies suggested that mastery learning yields improvements in motivation and learning. In another meta-analysis of 108 studies, Kulik, Kulik, and Bangert-Downs (1990) reported positive effects of mastery learning on student achievement, with less able students benefitting the most as they were given the additional time needed to master skills. Mastery learning appears to promote positive outcomes for student learning regardless of class size, content area, or class setting (Block & Anderson, 1975). Further, findings show that students in mastery learning settings learn material and retain information longer than students taught in traditional classrooms, student organizational skills and motivation improve, and teachers have higher expectations of all students (Zimmerman & Dibenedetto, 2008).

There is some evidence that mastery learning can improve reading achievement. Use of the mastery learning approach as an intervention strategy to increase reading achievement was investigated in a study of 363 Baltimore first graders (Crijnen, Feehan, & Kellam, 1998). In the intervention, reading skill instruction and activities were

individualized, giving students the time needed to learn specified skills before moving on. Along with additional time, students participated in flexible groupings and a variety of learning activities, based on the assumption that children need a variety of avenues to learn skills. It was found that children receiving the mastery learning condition experienced a more significant positive intervention effect, making expected achievement gains. Fuchs and Fuchs (1986) found in a study of 88 first graders that a mastery learning approach focusing on rich data collection for instructional decisions relating to skill development resulted in high reading achievement for low-achieving students. Higher reading achievement was attributed to more direct, structured, elaborate instruction and more frequent, detailed, and clear feedback. In a case study of children struggling after reading interventions, Knutson, Simmons, Good, and McDonagh (2004) presented findings that suggest that implementing mastery learning criteria for small groups of students, with frequent and formative assessments, produces positive results in oral reading fluency. Highly individualized feedback and interventions increased academic engagement and promoted success.

Response to intervention (RTI) is an approach that “integrates assessment and intervention within a multi-level prevention system to maximize student achievement” (Kuo, 2014, p. 611). RTI is designed to reduce the number of students requiring special education placement and is based on principles of differentiation by ability. RTI is a method of identifying students who will benefit from differentiation, with many schools involved in implementation using three tiers of intervention. In Tier 1, all students receive instruction based on ability level (Guskey & Jung, 2011; Walker-Dalhouse et al., 2009), with teachers “assuming responsibility for adjusting instruction according to

students' specific needs rather than following a predetermined skill sequence that may not match students' development" (Walker-Dalhouse et al., 2009, p. 85). The RTI model has proven effective in reducing referrals for special education services and increasing all areas of literacy, which results in enhanced reading scores for struggling readers (Green, et al., 2013; Kerins, Trotter, & Schoenbrodt, 2010). However, it should be noted that although RTI follows the mastery approach of differentiating instruction by ability, the order of skills presented may be differentiated as well, a departure from the pure mastery learning model.

The classrooms under investigation in this study provided opportunities for mastery learning through the literacy center management system. In this study, kindergarten teachers engaged in ongoing assessments to determine the skill mastery level for each student. Based on these assessments, students were assigned to specific activities at the various centers in order to build, revisit, and eventually master deficient skills. As students advance their academic level at literacy centers, success should foster the desire to put in more active learning time (Bloom, 1984). However, instead of working in isolation through classic implementations of mastery learning avenues such as individualized reading programs based on programmed learning, students had the opportunity to interact with peers of similar needs. Mastery learning research has demonstrated that students become cooperative in helping each other (Bloom, 1978). Cooperation is seen in literacy centers as small groups of students assist each other in explaining material and listening to each other's explanations, and through partner reading and writing. Within a mastery learning approach, the implementation of enrichment activities for students who have mastered the basic skills is also seen as

important, as students can extend their learning (Guskey, 2007). Extension of learning is evident in literacy center implementation as advanced kindergarten students are engaged in activities such as writing stories and reading chapter books based on topics of interest.

Review of Current Research

Introduction

This literature review focuses first on the effects of differentiating instruction for each of the five reading skills areas identified by the NRP (2000): phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. These five skills areas serve as the foundation for reading instruction at the project site. The review next focuses on the effectiveness of differentiating reading instruction by ability level, with attention to effects on regular education; special education and at-risk students; ELLs; and gifted and talented students. I reviewed research articles and professional texts obtained through hard copies of books and peer-reviewed journals, university library resources, and electronic databases, primarily ERIC, Education Research Complete, and SAGE. Search topics included *differentiated instruction*, *differentiated reading instruction*, *vocabulary*, *fluency*, *comprehension*, *phonics*, *phonemic awareness*, *English language learners*, *at-risk learners*, and *gifted learners*. This literature review includes literature published between 2007 and 2013.

Teaching young children to read has been described as one of the most important responsibilities of primary grade teachers (National Association for the Education of Young Children [NAEYC], 2009). Despite the NRP's influence toward targeting the five skills areas, many students struggle to become proficient readers (Wonder-McDowell, 2010). Due to increasing student diversity, with the student population including special

education students, English language learners, and underachievers, teachers are being called upon to differentiate instruction to provide flexibility of time and resources (Howard, 2009; Tomlinson, 1999). Designing differentiated instruction based on the assessed needs of each child has been promoted to reduce the number of children who are at risk for reading failure (Cihon, Gardener, Morrison, & Paul, 2008). The review that follows suggests that a range of student populations have been successful in mastering literacy skills when provided differentiated instruction based on ability level.

Differentiation and the Five Components of Reading

Vocabulary. Students' vocabulary plays important roles in their lives and future possibilities. Research has clearly indicated that vocabulary knowledge is highly correlated with overall reading achievement (NRA, 2000). The problem is that there are differences in vocabulary knowledge among learners from different ability and socioeconomic groups (Blachowicz, Fisher, & Watts-Taffe, 2005).

Research has suggested that vocabulary practices that are differentiated based on the needs of the learner and include word study, acting out, illustrating words, and explicit teaching of text vocabulary are associated with high vocabulary performance (Silverman & Crandell, 2010). Differentiating vocabulary instruction through an analytical method of comparing and contrasting words in varied contexts is most important for low-socioeconomic-status students and English language learners, as targeted, explicit vocabulary instruction shows the greatest gains in vocabulary knowledge (Silverman, 2007). In addition, the analytical approach offers opportunities for children's word learning at multiple levels, meeting the needs of all learners.

Studies investigating whether extended vocabulary instruction, incidental exposure, or embedded instruction results in greater word learning have found that extended instruction, which is characterized by explicit teaching of both contextual and definitional information, multiple exposures to words in varied contexts, and activities that promote applying and processing word meanings, was most effective at enhancing word knowledge (Coyne, McCoach, & Kapp, 2007; Coyne, McCoach, Loftus, Zipoli, & Kapp, 2009; Zipoli, Coyne, & McCoach, 2011). The extended instructional approach uses small, homogenous groups to intensify instruction and to stimulate interactions from all students.

Numerous studies have focused on at-risk learners in an attempt to provide research-based findings to be used in the classroom setting. Findings have suggested that at-risk kindergarten and first-grade learners should be engaged with vocabulary through a variety of activities in small group and individual settings, such as acting out the words and interacting with word meanings by making decisions about their use in various contexts (Beck & McKeown, 2007; Jalongo & Sobolak, 2011). As students receive supplemental support and vocabulary interventions, they are provided with multiple opportunities to be exposed to and interact with targeted words at their developmental level, increasing vocabulary knowledge (Puhalla, 2011; Pullen, Tuckwiller, & Konold, 2010). Additionally, Fien et al. (2011) emphasized that differentiation in small group settings promotes the extension of vocabulary through a systematic progression of skills and content and is effective at increasing vocabulary and comprehension of first-grade students with low language and vocabulary skills.

English language learners are a growing population in schools and often face many difficulties in acquiring the vocabulary knowledge need to be successful readers (Snow et al, 1998). Language learning strategies that effectively support vocabulary acquisition for ELLs are needed (Coyne et al., 2001). Consequently, Lugo-Neris, Jackson, and Goldstein (2010) suggested through a study examining best vocabulary instructional practices with ELLs that small group instruction implementing a Spanish bridging approach results in strong vocabulary growth. Additional studies have demonstrated that young ELLs engaged in small group and individual settings are allowed multiple opportunities to practice and expand word knowledge based on their vocabulary level, promoting vocabulary growth (Filippini, Gerber, & Leafstedt, 2012; Roessingh & Elgie, 2009). Furthermore, in a study examining the advantages of implementing a vocabulary plus phonological awareness intervention on Spanish-speaking first graders, Filippini et al. (2012) found that a focus on skill progression and mastery of vocabulary and phonological awareness builds word reading and reading fluency.

Phonemic awareness. Phonemic awareness is the ability to hear, identify, and work with the individual sounds that connect to make words (NRP, 2000). Explicit, systematic phonemic awareness instruction that has a thoughtful plan and purpose including the teaching of skills and sounds in a deliberate planned sequence should be implemented within the kindergarten classroom (NRP, 2000). Important indicators of future reading difficulties in young children are deficits in phonemic awareness skills (MacDonald & Cornwall, 1995). Explicit instruction in phonemic awareness is needed to

prevent reading failure for children at risk for reading difficulties (Pullen & Justice, 2003).

Research evidence has suggested that phonemic awareness and phonics skills increase when kindergarten and first-grade ELLs are engaged in explicit, direct, and systematic small group instruction and participate in independent learning activities that are constantly monitored with subsequent instruction and activity adjustments made based on skill mastery and progression (Gyovai, Cartledge, Kourea, Yourick, & Gibson, 2009). Explicit, systematic instruction to low-income preschoolers with teacher modeling, opportunities to practice skills in small groups, and multiple opportunities for independent demonstration of skill mastery has been found to increase phonemic awareness skills for these learners as well (Koutsoftas, Harmon, & Gray, 2009). Ryder, Tunmer, and Greaney's (2007) study of children with reading difficulties also suggested that using a sequenced progression of skill lessons in small group settings in a first grade whole-language classroom can assist learners in developing phonemic awareness and phonemically based decoding skills and subsequently progressing along the skills continuum.

Phonics. Phonics instruction involves teaching letter and sound relationships, as well as how this relationship is symbiotic to reading and spelling (NRP, 2000). Systematic synthetic phonics instruction improves decoding and spelling words and should be implemented as early as kindergarten and first grade (NRP, 2000). In fact, young children with a history of deficits in phonological awareness continue to struggle in reading throughout their school years (MacDonald & Cornwall, 1995). Some argued that explicit phonics instruction is not needed for all learners, as seen in Sonnenschien,

Stapleton, and Benson's (2010) study investigating the relation between classroom instructional practices and children's reading skills. Sonnenschien et al. found that children entering kindergarten and first grade with advanced phonic skills benefit more from an instructional emphasis on the meaning of the text compared to a decoding, phonics approach. Beverly, Giles, and Buck (2009) echoed this belief in a study of decodable text and first graders' reading achievement. The authors found that as readers advance, they benefit more from challenging and meaningful literature. Furthermore, Mesmer and Griffin's (2005) study of 362 primary teachers' phonics instruction indicated that explicit instruction can be combined with inductive approaches in ways that allow children to make discoveries in conjunction with the explicit teaching of skills.

Phonics development increases in young children with poor phonological skills when flexible small group instruction and independent activities focuses on a series of skills, moving from basic to complex according to skill mastery (Beverly et al., 2009; Giess, Rivers, Kennedy, & Lombardion, 2010). Consequently, children progress at different rates through the same material (Sharipo & Solity, 2008). Macdonald (2010) suggested that opportunities to engage in paired reading, as well as group work and games based on individual needs, improves reading and spelling skills for secondary students while building student confidence and motivation to engage in reading activities. Edwards (2008) added that high school students struggling with fluency benefit from small group, systematic phonics instruction, and subsequent paired reading groups that focuses on the need of each student.

Phonics instruction can also utilize visual phonics, an intervention tool that provides a hand language for every phoneme in the English language, putting the

intervention at the level of sounds, not letters, making sounds concrete (Morrison, Trezek, & Paul, 2008). The effectiveness of a visual phonics intervention program on kindergarten children at-risk for reading failure is evident as it increases phonics skills within this population through small groups and individual settings used to practice and extend learning opportunities (Cihon et al., 2008). Equally important is the impact of visual phonics instruction on deaf students in one-to-one settings, demonstrating that phonological awareness skills increase and a transfer of learning to whole-group instruction occurs when lessons are tailored to the student's needs and progression of skills (Smith & Wang, 2010).

Fluency. Fluent readers are able to read orally with speed, accuracy and proper expression (NRP, 2000). Fluency is a necessary component of reading proficiency (Hudson, Lane, & Pullen, 2005) and a factor for comprehending texts (NRA, 2000). Instructional practices that focus on oral reading and repeated readings are needed to build fluency (NRP, 2000). Students at-risk, including students with disabilities, often read slowly and/or inaccurately, impeding the comprehension process (Gersten, Fuchs, Williams, & Baker, 2001).

Research evidence has supported the effectiveness of fluency interventions for young ELLs in multiple settings (Begeny, Ross, Greene, Mitchell, & Whitehouse, 2012; Ross & Begeny, 2011; Soriano, Miranda, Soriano, Nievas, & Felix, 2011). Selecting reading passages based on appropriate difficulty level, exposure to modeled fluent reading, explicit instruction of skills, systematic correction, ongoing progress monitoring, and engagement in repeated readings have proved to be productive strategies at building fluency in ELLs (Begeny et al., 2012; Ross & Begeny, 2011; Soriano et al., 2011). In

addition, differentiated small group settings showed that when students of similar needs are placed together for fluency instruction, students were more engaged as they participated in shared reading experiences at their reading level (Ross & Begeny, 2011).

One-on-one settings executing similar strategies are effective on oral reading fluency for fourth grade students with mild disabilities as well (Watson, Fore, & Boon, 2009). Differentiating reading passages according to ability level was a key in fostering the fluency process. Oral reading fluency also increases through the engagement of computerized programs in which students read passages and progress through a developmental sequence of activities (Gibson, Cartledge & Keyes, 2011). As students work at their own pace and move through the passages and activities, fluency and comprehension mastery are demonstrated.

Comprehension. Reading comprehension is an active process that requires an interaction between the reader and a text (NRP, 2000). Explicit teaching of comprehension skills is needed to guide students in using specific cognitive strategies to understand what they read (NRA, 2000).

Examining strategies for improving reading comprehension for ELLs, McElvain (2010) found when fourth to sixth grade students participate in a combination of independent and small group settings, with students reading a text at their independent reading level, then meeting with a group of similar ability level peers for instruction and discussion purposes, their comprehension skills, engagement, and motivation increases. Solari and Gerber (2008) investigated instructional interventions on reading comprehension in the kindergarten ELL population and found when students were placed in small ability level groups and participated in skill instruction and activities that moved

them from easier elements of comprehension to more difficult ones as skills were mastered, an increase in reading comprehension skills occurred.

Other at-risk students have increased their reading comprehension when placed in small groups based on ability levels and given explicit instruction supporting multiple aspects of reading around leveled texts (Guthrie et al., 2009). Teacher modeling, scaffolding, opportunities to practice skills, daily collaboration, and opportunities to read with a group or with a partner was employed with fifth grader students to strengthen comprehension skills. Seventh- and eighth-grade students have also increased their comprehension skills when strategies were modeled by the teacher, students practiced skills multiple times, and students demonstrated skill mastery in a small, homogenous group before progressing (Vaughn et al., 2011). Faggella-Luby and Wardwell (2011) echoed the need for at-risk fifth- and sixth-grade students receiving reading comprehension strategies that include intensive and explicit instruction in addition to opportunities to practice reading.

Differentiation and the Student Population

Regular education students. Research findings have indicated that regular-education students have been successful in language arts when provided differentiated instruction based on ability levels. In a study to determine the developmental trajectories for literacy skills of children from kindergarten through third grade, Foster and Miller (2007) found that learning to read requires students to move through a sequence of overlapping developmental stages, and skills must be mastered at each stage before moving to subsequent stages. Placing students in small literacy readiness groups, targeted skills are addressed and the achievement gap can be closed, reducing the

potential need for children being referred for special education services in later years. Utilizing a mix of individualized, paired, and small groups, students can work on particular tasks that reflect their level of readiness, creating a supportive literacy environment through different access routes to understanding.

Tobin and McInnes' (2008) case study of grade 2/3 language arts classrooms echoed these findings as tiered activities focused all students on the same essential skills, but at different levels of complexity, maximizing the likelihood that each student was successful while appropriately challenged. First graders' literacy skill growth has also been demonstrated when students are engaged in small group settings, practicing skills based on academic strengths and weaknesses, and presented with adaptations in activities according to developing skills (Connor, et al., 2009). Differentiation of reading instruction in small ability level groups and subsequent independent or paired extension activities in the kindergarten classroom results in stronger literacy outcomes as well (Otaiba, Connor, Folsom, Greulich, & Meadows, 2011).

Observing, monitoring, assessing, and modifying literacy activities to meet student needs increase emergent literacy skills (Elliot & Olliff, 2008). Differentiation based on ability levels aligns with a student-centered approach to instruction, and in a comparison study of student-centered and skills-based instructional approaches on 19 second graders, Davis (2010) noted that a student-centered approach positively impacts students as appropriately challenging tasks promotes student participation and opportunities for success. Student centered approaches focus on small groups, collaborative tasks, and individualized skill based practice to support differentiation and meet the reading needs of all students.

Utilizing instruction that focuses on a progression of skills is often seen as time consuming by some however (Arlin, 1982; Good & Brophy, 1984; Guskey, 2007). Arlin (1982) argued that allowing time for students to master tasks before moving on takes time away from other learning areas. Good and Brophy (1984) agreed as mastery learning requires extra instruction or learning time. Although research has shown that providing time for students to be engaged in correctives to master skills may lessen the amount of material that is covered initially, students gain confidence in learning situations and are more likely to initiate corrective activities on their own outside of the classroom (Guskey, 2007).

At-risk students and students with disabilities. Research findings have also suggested that at-risk and students with disabilities experience success when given opportunities to work at their ability levels and master skills before moving on to subsequent skills. Teachers who ensure students with reading learning disabilities master each smaller skill before moving on to more difficult skills, promote success and the building of a collection of needed skills for reading mastery (Allor, Mathes, Jones, Champlin, & Cheatham, 2010). In Hong, Corter, Hong, and Pelletier's (2011) study of homogeneously grouped kindergartners for instruction and support purposes, results showed when low-ability students are given time to master skills before moving on, self-esteem improves. At-risk students also benefitted from small group settings in which differentiated small groups engage in spelling and writing words with manipulatives, using their varying knowledge of sound-letter relationships, improving phonological processing and phonemic awareness knowledge (Weiser & Mathes, 2011).

Research has supported the need for early, explicit reading intervention for students at risk for failure. This support was seen in Cooke, Kretlow, and Helf's (2010) study that compared the progress of kindergarten who received small-group reading intervention across the full school year with those who began the same intervention midyear. Findings showed that at-risk kindergartners receiving supplementary, small group reading instruction for the entire school year outperformed their peers who did not in areas of phonemic awareness and early decoding skills. Cooke et al. concluded that individualizing instruction to meet each child's needs, providing explicit instruction and modeling in small groups, progressing through a sequence of skills, and providing multiple opportunities to master skills in small groups and independent settings are important practices.

In a study of reading instruction for students with intellectual disabilities, Allor et al. (2010) found mentally disabled students have experienced success with interventions that focus on extensive practice and high quality individualized instruction. Providing interventions that that built prerequisite skills through direct instruction laid foundational skills needed for further achievement. Delivering guidance through explicit reading instruction, responding to individual learning needs, and scaffolding instruction promoted reading success.

Positive reading early intervention results have also been seen in children receiving early-intervention in both kindergarten and first grade (Dion, Brodeur, Gosselin, Campeau, & Fuchs, 2010). Interventions consisting of whole-group instruction with a peer-mediated session following, allow students to work in pairs to apply and practice skills. At-risk students receiving interventions in kindergarten and first grade

develop better reading skills by the end of first grade than their at-risk peers receiving interventions in first grade only.

Although many research studies strongly support homogenous grouping and its positive impact on reading skills for the at-risk population, Hong and Hong's (2009) study of kindergartners found evidence that the benefits of ability grouping disappear when the amount of reading time is limited. Hong et al. (2011) further demonstrated that low-ability children actually experience detrimental effects when instructional time is limited in ability level groups, as teachers fail to have extensive interactions with the students. Some researchers suggested that it is not the instructional setting that contributes to student success, rather, it is the quality of the instruction (Good & Brophy, 2008). In a meta-analysis of 10 studies relating to reading interventions, Wanzek et al. (2013) also found that a small group size did not yield an increase in achievement for students in grades 4 through 12. The authors noted this could be due to a lack of differentiation in the small groups represented in the studies. Evidence also suggested that student placement in ability groups may be based not only on student's achievement, but also individual traits such as race/ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, and behavior (Condrón, 2007). This inequality may lead to increased achievement gaps based on student's demographic factors (Condrón, 2008). Further, Catsambis, Mulkey, Buttaró, Stellman, and Koch's (2012) analysis of the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-Kindergarten Cohort national data set, found that boys were overrepresented in low-achieving groups, resulting in lower expectations from the teacher and less motivating assignments.

English language learners. One specific group that is at-risk for reading failure is the English language learner population (NEA, 2008). ELL children tend to have poor literacy outcomes and lower academic achievement than their peers, encounter many difficulties in comprehending and processing information, and are in need of instructors that provide effective, differentiated classroom strategies (NEA, 2013). Ability grouping in reading with differentiated instructional strategies during kindergarten has been significantly associated with greater benefits for language-minority Hispanic learners, and may be an effective tool to combat the achievement gap faced by our fasted growing student population (Robinson, 2008). Ability grouping fosters the implementation of a developmental sequence of specific activities, allowing re-teaching and multiple opportunities for ELLs to master skills (Lesaux, Kieffer, Faller, & Kelley, 2010).

Quality instruction seems to be the key in obtaining optimal outcomes for ELLs. This includes the use of differentiation through small-group instruction or one-to-one tutoring and cooperative learning groups (Cheung & Slavin, 2012). Cooperative learning groups are noted as worthy due to ELLs as this grouping provides daily opportunities to use developing language in meaningful contexts (Adesope, Lavin, Thompson, and Ungerleider, 2010; Lesaux et al. 2010).

Interventions focusing on small-group instruction, with an implementation of varying activities and levels of scaffolding, develops oral language, phonological awareness, and letter/letter sound knowledge of Spanish-speaking ELL preschool children (Farver, Longian, & Eppe, 2009). Interventions implemented in kindergarten has been contributed to a continued increase in performance in second grade, as seen in Vadasy and Sanders' (2012) follow-up study of English learners who participated in an

efficacy trial of a kindergarten phonics-based intervention. Findings indicated that when supplemental phonics instruction is implemented in kindergarten, ELLs continued to perform well in word level outcomes in second grade.

Gifted and talented students. In addition, research also suggested that gifted and talented students experience success in language arts when appropriately challenged through engagement in ability-differentiated activities. This literacy success was seen in studies investigating enrichment programs on second through sixth graders oral reading fluency and attitude toward reading (Reis et al., 2007; Reis, McCoach, Little, Muller, & Kaniskan, 2010). Providing enriched reading experiences through small group daily differentiated reading instruction and independent reading of challenging texts, reading fluency, engagement, and attitudes toward reading increased for gifted students. The effectiveness of enrichment programs for gifted students from low-income families has also proven successful (Miller & Gentry, 2010). Working in small groups focusing on enrichment opportunities, gifted students show an increase in motivation as they engage in hands-on activities and real-life experiences, demonstrating an increase in content knowledge through fast-paced, above-level activities, building social support through interactions with similar ability level peers.

Reis and Boeve (2009) studied academically gifted elementary students and found that talented readers are often not challenged with appropriate reading level material in the classroom setting, yet need this opportunity daily to develop critical thinking skills and be prepared for challenges as they encounter advanced content in later grades. Further, a study of middle school students by Powers (2008) found that when gifted

students are actively engaged in challenging learning they are more motivated and achieve at higher levels.

Adelson and Carpenter (2011) found that smaller grouping of gifted kindergarten children provided them the opportunity to be appropriately challenged, enhancing reading success. Placing children in small achievement groups promotes working at their own pace with extended learning opportunities. In a study investigating giftedness in young children ages 3 to 5 years old, Coates, Shimmin, and Thompson (2009) also found that a stimulating and challenging environment which allowed children to explore ideas and extend their thinking met the needs of these early developers. Enrichment opportunities, chances to work independently to extend tasks, and engagement in paired groupings to share ideas promoted literacy success.

In contrast to studies supporting ability level grouping for gifted students, Hong et al. (2011) found in a study of kindergartners that homogenous grouping shows no benefits for high achievers. The authors contributed the absence of benefits from gifted students' strengths in self-regulation, cognitive ability, and basic skills, enabling them to succeed in a class regardless of instructional management. Strong home literacy and parental support are additional factors that may contribute to high-ability students being successful in any classroom setting. In addition, Hong et al. (2011) noted that as teachers met with homogenous groups, the resources used were more suitable for teaching students in the medium ability group, enabling that group to reap the greater benefits.

Overall, the research literature suggested that differentiation in individual, paired, and small-group settings fosters academic growth for a wide variety of students. Students who are provided opportunities to work at their own pace and ability level and to build

skills sequentially appear motivated to learn and succeed academically. Although there is substantial evidence that varied groupings based on mastery-type placement are beneficial to all students, there has been no published research on the effectiveness in kindergarten literacy centers.

Implications

If findings from the study demonstrate that implementation of kindergarten literacy centers are not consistent with the principles of mastery learning based on differentiation by ability, I can create an in-service professional development for teachers to address areas of concern and to provide activities to use when differentiating instruction for all learners in their classroom. The professional development would focus on the five components of reading and provide a variety of differentiated ideas/activities to meet the needs of and challenge all learners. If findings from the study demonstrate that implementation of kindergarten literacy centers are consistent with the principles of mastery learning based on differentiation by ability, I would create a professional development that would elaborate and extend on the differentiated instructional practices currently implemented, with an emphasis on the student population (e.g. at-risk students) that continue to struggle.

Summary

Section 1 has introduced the local problem of a high proportion of below-grade reading scores at the completion of kindergarten at a Georgia public elementary school. The local problem of low kindergarten reading achievement has been linked to the more global problem of underachievement across the U.S., leading to continued academic difficulties in school. The local and global problems have significant educational effects,

including underachievement, low self-esteem and reduced motivation to learn, as well as social effects, including decreased opportunities in the workforce. In order to improve kindergarten reading scores, the project site has implemented a daily literacy workshop approach that incorporates literacy centers where students work individually or in small groups on identified needs. However, it is unknown whether the implementation of literacy centers has been consistent with principles of mastery learning and differentiated instruction by ability level, which provide the theoretical and research support for the literacy centers. Section 2 describes the methods that will be used to investigate the extent to which implementation of literacy centers are consistent with the principles of mastery learning based on differentiation by ability.

Section 2: The Methodology

Introduction

Section 1 describes the need to improve reading achievement among kindergarten students at the project site and details the current instructional approach called *literacy workshop*, which includes the literacy centers. To the extent that the literacy centers may not be following the principles of mastery learning upon which they are designed, students may not be attaining proficiency in the requisite reading skills. In order to study the existing manner of implementation of the literacy centers, I used a case study design to investigate the research question: Is the implementation of literacy centers at the project site consistent with the principles of mastery learning based on differentiation by ability?

A case study design was selected because of the need for an in-depth understanding of how the implementation of literacy centers in kindergarten contributes to the reading achievement of students with a variety of literacy needs. Creswell (2012) defined *case study research* as an “in-depth exploration of a bounded system based on extensive data collection” (p. 465). Data collection procedures are varied and sustained over a period of time (Creswell, 2009). According to Merriam (2009,) a case study is particularistic, focusing on a “particular situation, event, program, or phenomenon” (p. 43); descriptive, providing thick, rich descriptions of the phenomenon; and heuristic, which can “bring about the discovery of new meaning, extend the reader’s experience, or confirm what is known” (p. 44).

The phenomenon under investigation is bounded, as the number of people involved in the study is limited to the teachers who comprise the grade level at the project

site. To gain an in-depth understanding, multiple data collection techniques are used in case studies. In this particular study, I explored the differentiated aspects of kindergarten literacy centers through individual interviews relating to perceptions of differentiation, how differentiation is determined, and the implementation of differentiation in literacy centers. Classroom observations were conducted during literacy center time, focusing on student activities and interactions, providing a rich, detailed description of literacy center implementation. Additional data collection techniques included running records and reading skills mastery assessments. Data was collected in each classroom.

I considered and rejected other qualitative research designs for this study. For example, ethnography was not selected because a specific intact culture's values, beliefs, and languages would not be described over a long period of time (Creswell, 2012). Phenomenology was not considered because the emphasis of the study was not on understanding human experiences and interpretations of these experiences (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2010). Grounded theory was also not chosen because the study was intended to deepen the understanding of the phenomenon of a classroom management system rather than to develop theory grounded in the data (Lodico et al., 2010).

Limitations of case studies include the difficulty of generalizing to the larger population and possible biases in data collection and interpretation (Merriam, 2009).

Participants

For this case study, I used purposeful sampling to select the participants. Purposeful sampling allows the researcher to “intentionally select individuals and sites to learn or understand the central phenomenon” (Creswell, 2012, p. 206). In purposeful

sampling, the researcher selects participants who are key informants, persons who have specific knowledge about the topic of investigation (Lodioc et al., 2010). The purposeful sampling technique used was homogeneous sampling (Lodico et al., 2011), with the participants being kindergarten teachers at the chosen Georgia public school.

Homogenous sampling was selected because the teachers all shared the same characteristic of instructors who implement literacy centers in the kindergarten classroom. Limitations of this sampling technique include the following: It is not easily defensible as being representative of populations due to potential subjectivity of the researcher, and due to the sampling technique being subjective, the likelihood of researcher bias is high (Merriam, 2009).

The study participants comprised all kindergarten teachers at Peachtree Elementary School. All of these teachers had received staff development in literacy workshop with the exclusion of two. Including every kindergarten teacher in the study yielded data that comprised multiple perspectives and literacy center implementation practices. These rich data provided an in-depth understanding of differentiation practices, including strengths and weaknesses across the grade level. Table 3 displays the demographic data for each teacher.

Table 3

Kindergarten Teachers' Demographic Data

| Teacher | Age | Gender | Race/Ethnicity | Number of years teaching | Number of years teaching kindergarten | Educational level |
|---------|-----|--------|------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------|
| A | 60 | Female | White/American | 14 | 14 | Master's |
| B | 24 | Female | White/American | 2 | 1st | Bachelor's |
| C | 26 | Female | White/American | 2 | 2 | Master's |
| D | 50 | Female | White/American | 7 | 7 | Bachelor's |
| E | 32 | Female | White/American | 10 | 10 | Bachelor's |
| F | 36 | Female | White/Hispanic | 8 | 8 | Master's |
| G | 35 | Female | Black/African American | 11 | 2 | Bachelor's |
| H | 25 | Female | White/American | 4 | 4 | Master's |
| I | 28 | Female | White/American | 2 | 1st | Master's |
| J | 45 | Female | White/Asian American | 1st | 1st | Bachelor's |
| K | 32 | Female | White/American | 7 | 2 | Bachelor's |

Teachers were encouraged to participate in this study so as to ensure data saturation, increasing the likelihood that valid and reliable results related to the variables under investigation were achieved. Encouraging teacher participation occurred through a group informational meeting where teachers were informed that all data collected would be confidential and written data would be given to each participant to read to ensure accuracy. Maintaining teacher participation occurred through the knowledge that ideas and information gained from the study would be used to construct a manual that could serve as a resource for strengthening various areas in literacy center implementation.

Meeting with individual teachers throughout the study took place 11 times for clarification of data, answering questions, and encouragement purposes. Gaining access to the participants began with approval from the local school's principal along with the local board of education. A local School Research Request Form was completed and submitted to the local principal for approval/signing. A photocopy or fax was sent to the Department of Research and Evaluation at the Instructional Support Center for documentation and filing. As I was an employee at the selected site, access to participants once the study began was easy to obtain. The letter of cooperation is found in Appendix A.

In establishing a researcher-participant working relationship, I used four principles to guide the treatment of my research participants. The first was respect for autonomy, the second was to cause no stress or harm, the third was to strive to work for the benefits of those involved, and the fourth was commitment to distribute responsibilities and rewards equally between researcher and participants.

Measures for ethical protection of participants included the arrangement of a formal meeting with the participants explaining the purpose of the study and the reason for requesting their participation in the interviews and observations. Participants received a letter of consent stating that their participation would be kept confidential along with their identity. In addition, the participants were assured that participation was strictly voluntary and would not interfere with their job in any way, ensuring protection from harm. Participants were also made aware that they could withdraw from the study at any time. The participant consent form with background information and explanations of procedures and risks, the voluntary nature of the study, and confidentiality was provided

to each participant. Signatures were obtained from each participant. To ensure protection of anonymity, a composite picture of the group rather than a picture of one individual was developed. A sample consent form is found in Appendix B.

Data Collection

This case study involved the collection of data from multiple sources of evidence, including interviews, observations, and documents. According to Merriam (2009), qualitative data are most commonly collected from interviews and observations. I designed two data collection instruments: the interview and the observation protocol. Lodico et al. (2010) suggested that an interview protocol (Appendix C) consist of an explanation of the purpose of the study, places to record date and background information on the interviewee, and questions to be used in the interview. Further, the interview protocol was developed to ensure that all participants were asked the same questions and to aid in collecting data in a systematic manner. The observation protocol (Appendix D) included questions and phrases identifying the actions and interactions to focus on during the observation (Lodico et al., 2010).

The interview and observation protocol were piloted in a sample first grade classroom to address any potential problems, as well as to ensure that the instruments validly measured the behaviors/phenomenon under investigation. Permission to pilot the protocols was obtained from the principal at the project site. It was determined through the piloting of the interview protocol that the instrument was indeed valid and capable of measuring and yielding data that is needed to address the research questions. Validity was agreed upon by myself and the first grade teacher in a follow-up meeting after the piloted session. The instrument led to successfully obtaining information relating to literacy

center implementation. While the observation protocol was valid at collecting data relating to what literacy activities groups and individual students were engaged in, I decided to not write notes on the form at the time of observation. Each literacy center had a variety of activities that integrated the reading components, and I found that it was difficult to collect all the data while determining which components of reading each center was focusing on. Instead, data were collected by writing up all activities observed, and during analysis, determination of how each activity corresponded with the reading components was made. Due to the instrument being piloted in one classroom, reliability was not ensured. Document review is another form of qualitative data collection (Lodico et al., 2010). I collected preexisting and ongoing test data to track student growth and mastery of skills.

Interviews. Merriam (2009) noted that the person-to-person interview is the most common type of interview, with one person eliciting information from another. The purpose of an interview is to obtain information that cannot be observed (Merriam, 2009). For this case study, a semistructured interview was employed, as probing was needed for clarification purposes. Questions were constructed based on the research relating to the principles of mastery learning and differentiation by ability. Nonleading, open-ended, neutral questions were used. Interview questions centered on how participants felt about differentiation, the effectiveness of literacy center implementation in promoting reading growth, if/how activities were differentiated for each student, how students were grouped, and if/what assessments were used to determine the ability level of each child.

After initial contact with the participants was made and consent was obtained, I conducted person-to-person interviews according to each participant's schedule. The approximate interview length of 15-20 minutes was determined after the pilot interview. The interview procedures included reminding the participants of the confidentiality of their responses, striving for neutrality and being nonjudgmental, using effective probes as needed to obtain more detailed information, tape-recording the conversations for data accuracy, and taking notes as needed. Each teacher was interviewed one time. Interviews were conducted at the end of the workday or during grade-level planning in the participant's classroom at Peachtree Elementary in the winter of 2014. The protocol for teacher interviews is found in Appendix C.

Observations. According to Merriam (2009), observations, along with interviews, are a primary source of data collection in qualitative research. Merriam noted that observations usually occur in a natural setting where the phenomenon of interest can be studied through a firsthand account. The purpose of the observation for this case study was to observe kindergarten students' interactions with literacy center activities and among groups of children. An observational protocol and recording sheet were developed identifying the activities and interactions to focus on. Instructional behaviors to be observed related to how phonics, phonemic awareness, comprehension, fluency, and vocabulary were integrated in literacy centers through a differentiated, ability-level approach. The second observation was also used to determine whether activities within the centers changed as students progressed and mastered skills, as noted through reading levels and skill mastery data. My role was one of an observer participant (Lodico et al., 2010), meaning that I did not participate within the classroom literacy centers.

After interview data was collected, I observed individual classrooms. Using the observation protocol/recording sheet, I observed the implementation of literacy centers and recorded detailed field notes relating to how activities were differentiated, ways in which various groupings were implemented, and student engagement. Reflective field notes were also used to describe feelings and thoughts on what was being observed. All classrooms were observed two times during the literacy center block, which averaged 45 minutes. The length of observations differed, as teachers varied in the time allotted for small group instruction and concurrent literacy center implementation. The first set of observations took place between late January and mid-February 2014. The second set of observations took place between early and mid-May 2014. Each set of observations occurred over a 2-week period to permit adequate time to observe all classrooms. Two observations per classroom were deemed necessary in order to view changes in literacy centers as students mastered and progressed through literacy skills. The protocol for teacher observations is found in Appendix D.

Documents. Merriam (2009) stated that documents apply to a “wide range of written, visual, digital, and physical material relevant to the study at hand” (p. 139). Documents can include those produced for reasons other than research, such as public records and personal documents, as well as those generated by or for the researcher for the purpose of a study, such as assessment data (Merriam, 2009).

For this case study, I collected documents to support evidence from the interviews and observations. Group data was collected per classroom. For example, percentages relating to reading levels obtained from running records and children mastering reading skills obtained from GKIDS was used to determine levels of skill mastery per classroom

and grade level. These levels provided an understanding of which literacy activities groups of students should be engaged in within literacy centers. Data was used to track growth and mastery of skills across periods of observation points, determining whether literacy-based activities evolved with skill mastery. These same data were also collected to show literacy levels at the beginning of the year. Reading level was used to show growth from the beginning to the end of the school year, while GKIDS data was used to show growth from the end of the first quarter to the end of the school year. These data were obtained from each kindergarten teacher. A recording form guides teachers as they take a one-on-one assessment, which is then used to determine a child's current reading level, areas where a child's reading needs to improve, and a child's ability to comprehend text. To ensure interrater reliability, all teachers participated in training relating to recording and analyzing running records. Training was provided by the K-1 literacy coach. To ensure interrater reliability of GKIDS data, all teachers were trained in how to properly use the scripted manual for assessment purposes. Training was provided by the kindergarten assistant principal, who was also in charge of testing. The manual lists specific assessment activities and performance-level indicators for each skill.

Role of the researcher. I have 20 years teaching experience and have been employed at Peachtree Elementary as a kindergarten teacher for 5 years. I am also the grade-level chair, serving as a liaison between the administration and the kindergarten team. I have no supervisory authority. My role as grade-level chair had the potential to affect data collection, as kindergarten teachers might have feared that any weaknesses in their practices could be conveyed to the administration. To alleviate these fears, I

ensured confidentiality and anonymity throughout the study. The desire to strengthen the grade level as a whole in regard to reading was stated.

Being a kindergarten teacher and having a strong desire to raise reading achievement across the grade-level, I had to be careful to avoid biases relating to the topic of study. These biases were diminished through the following of strict protocols and utilizing strategies to enhance the reliability and internal and external validity of the study, including an audit trail, member checks, triangulation, and rich-thick descriptions (Merriam, 2009).

Data Analysis

I conducted data analysis on the responses from the teacher interviews, the classroom observations of literacy centers, and related documents. Data analysis and collection was ongoing and simultaneous, providing data that was both “parsimonious and illuminating” (Merriam, 2009, p. 171). Each piece of data was studied and reflected upon in a written manner that guided me in additional questions to ask and things to observe or look for in the next data collection set. Each set of data was compared with the previous one(s), informing the data collection process and assisting in a set of tentative categories or themes (Merriam, 2009). Data analysis was conducted using the constant comparison method, as codes within the data was grouped by similarity and themes were identified based on each grouping (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007).

Interview and observation data was organized separately. Interview data was transcribed verbatim, including nonverbal communication such as laughter, hesitancy, and changes in tone. The research question was used as the framework for the data analysis.

Descriptive coding and category construction was used to analyze the data.

Descriptive coding involved making descriptive notes, or open coding, throughout a data set (Merriam, 2009). These codes were then analyzed and combined according to similarities, an analytical coding approach (Merriam, 2009). Each subsequent data set was analyzed, merging codes with the first set of data. The coded data were analyzed for patterns and regularities, becoming categories or themes, with new codes added as additional data was reviewed. Refining of the categories took place throughout, identifying the major concepts to be used to interpret and explain the data.

Once the main themes were determined, each unit relating to that category was placed within it. Hypotheses were then formulated from the themes and data was reexamined for both confirming and disconfirming evidence to test it (Lodico et al., 2010). Confirming evidence took place through triangulation of data utilizing multiple methods of data collection (Merriam, 2009). Once data were obtained and analyzed for themes from interviews, observational data was used to support these themes. Observational data was used to check that what was told in the interviews was actually taking place in the classroom. For example, when interview data showed that teachers choose a variety of activities based on ability levels, then observations should demonstrate these varied activities within literacy centers. Document data was used with the first observational data to confirm that groups of students were working on skills that had not been mastered. Document data was then used with the subsequent observation to confirm that as groups of students progressed through skills, they moved on to other tasks. As data showed that groups of students had mastered certain skills, then observational data should confirm that students had moved to tasks that built on new

skills and areas that need strengthening. Document data was also used to support themes from interviews and observations. Disconfirming evidence occurred through the continuous reviewing of collected data or the collection of new data. As disconfirming evidence was found, I revisited and revised the hypothesis. The only software program used in analyzing this study was Microsoft Word 2013.

Intercoder reliability was ensured as another coder was utilized to ensure the coding of data and themes was consistent. After transcribed interviews were coded, the additional coder and I met to compare and contrast codes. Several initial categories (12/18, 67%) were noted as being consistent, including the use of independent/dependent centers, small group and independent groupings, types of rotations, assessment driven activities, ability levels, skill integration within centers, flexible groupings, revisit of skills, meeting individual needs, ability based centers, differentiation, and student success. Discrepant categories (6/18, 33%) included the use of modeling and support, hands on learning, student motivation, other content area integration, student accountability, and high teacher expectations. The additional coder and I met to discuss the initial categories and agreed on the combining of categories into themes to be used throughout the study. Discrepant cases were revisited and sought throughout the various interviews, all codes were viewed as being acceptable by both persons and also combined into the themes.

To enhance the reliability as well as the internal and external validity of this study, specific strategies were implemented. Merriam (2009) defined reliability as whether the findings in a study can be duplicated by other researchers. In qualitative research, replication often does not yield the same results, thus the important question is

“whether the results are consistent with the data collected” (Merriam, p. 221). For this case study, I used the strategies of triangulation and an audit trail to strengthen the reliability of the study. The data from the various interviews, observations, and documents were triangulated to verify the findings. The audit trail involved following specific protocols for data collection and analysis.

Internal validity, according to Merriam (2009), deals with how research findings “match reality” (p. 213) and if these findings “capture what is really there” (p. 213). In this case study I utilized triangulation by collecting and analyzing multiple sources of data, including teacher interviews, observations of literacy centers, and related documents to confirm the findings. Member checks were also used, asking the participants if the preliminary analysis was accurate. Each participant was given their transcribed interview and observations and verified the accuracy of information and interpretations.

Merriam (2009) noted that external validity is “concerned with the extent to which the findings of one study can be applied to other situations” (p. 223). Understanding generalization in qualitative research, requires the reader to decide if the study applies to his or her particular situation (Merriam). To enhance the possibility of the findings transferring to another setting, rich, thick descriptions was employed (Lodico et al., 2010). These descriptions included descriptions of the setting and participants, as well as detailed descriptions of the findings with supportive evidence.

Procedures to deal with discrepant cases included searching for, recording, analyzing, and reporting cases of conflicting data that were an exception to the patterns or that modified patterns within the data. Presenting evidence that is contradictory in nature

to a given theme, adds to the credibility of an account, making the account more realistic and valid (Creswell, 2009).

Results

The purpose of this study is to investigate the extent to which implementation of literacy centers is consistent with the principles of mastery learning based on differentiation by ability. Results for each data set are organized by research question, with emerging themes under each question. Each data set is presented in chronological order of collection, with interviews first, then the first set of observations, and then the second set of observations. Complete interview data is shown in Appendix E. The first round of observational data is shown in Appendix F and the second round in Appendix G. Document results will be discussed last with accompanying tables presenting data.

Teacher Interviews

Themes that emerged from the teacher interviews are organized by research question. For the first research question, *How are children assigned to learning tasks at the literacy centers?*, four themes were identified.

Theme 1: Initial Formal and Informal Assessments

The first theme related to literacy center task assignments was determining student academic knowledge at the beginning of the year through the consistent use of formal and informal assessments. Most participants reported that running records and checklists were used to determine activities and groupings at the beginning of the year for their students. Most participants stated that running records were used to determine reading levels and many noted the use of checklists to determine letter/letter sound knowledge. Teacher C acknowledged that her paraprofessional used Fountas and Pinnell

(2008) at the beginning of the year to determine reading levels of students. Fountas and Pinnell is a benchmark assessment system utilizing a series of texts that can be used to identify a student's current reading level and progress along a gradient of text levels over time. When asked how she used assessments, Teacher D said that “At the beginning of the year I assess my children to see what reading level they’re at and break them into ability level.” Teacher G commented that she has “always used Fountas and Pinnell” and used “running records to group them.” Teacher H noted that Fountas & Pinnell is used “to determine what specific reading level they are on”, and checklists and observations “determines where I group them and work specifically on with them.” Teacher I also said that formal assessments are used to “find out exactly where my students are so I know what they need in literacy centers.” One discrepant case was Teacher E, and she acknowledged that assessments are not used for grouping purposes with her statement that “At the beginning of the year they (groupings) were just random but as the reading groups formed and I came to know the students I formed the groups they are in now.” Another discrepant case was Teacher G, while she noted the use of running records and sight word checklist assessments, she did not mention a letter/letter sound one.

Theme 2: Flexible Groupings

A second theme related to literacy center task assignments was opportunities for independent and collaborative learning through the varied use of flexible groupings. Teachers A, C, D, E, I, and K noted homogenous groupings, while Teachers B, F, G, H, and J utilized heterogeneous groups. Whether homogeneous or heterogeneous, participants noted that students were able to support and assist each other as needed.

Teacher B said “Students can work with each other,” Teacher E mentioned “They will talk to each other” and “They have learned to help each other,” and Teacher C noted “If they are in a center and they have a question they can ask each other.” Within both groupings, higher students answered questions and provided vocabulary for lower students. Teacher D commented that “Children can ask a higher level child to help them,” and Teacher H stated “The lower kids can work up to a point and then they get stuck and that is when the higher ones will come in and help.” Within the groupings, students were also paired according to common languages. Teacher J mentioned that she “Sometimes finds a higher ESOL student and pairs them with another student who is a lower ESOL” and her two children from India are paired together because they are comfortable with each other and can help each other.

Students in Teachers B, F, I, and K’s classes chose their literacy center for the day, while other Teachers preferred to place students. Some participants, such as Teachers D and E grouped their students in literacy centers based on their guided reading groups, while others like Teachers G and H also took into account social skills and the ability to work well together.

Participants commented that some of their literacy center groupings are independent, while others are collaborative such as through paired and group games, as well as reading poems and stories to each other. Some participants utilized a read to someone center that paired students and promoted reading and working collaboratively. In regards to reading, Teacher B said “Sometimes the higher student reads to the lower student” and Teacher E said “Other children ask a higher level child to help them read, helps with words they don’t know.” A discrepant case was Teacher A as she noted her

groups are only independent because “When you start collaborating that can cause problems.” Teacher A does not utilize games or reading pairs in her literacy centers.

Theme 3: Varied Learning Tasks

The third theme related to literacy center task assignments was focusing on a variety of reading skills through the intentional use of varied learning tasks. Teacher C commented that within literacy centers, students are “working on different skills” and on “different topics we are learning about.” Teacher K said students work on more than just reading, “They can work on writing, word work, rhyming, different activities that help their reading.” Participants noted a variety of reading skills being addressed and integrated within literacy centers. Centers included word work, read to self, read to someone, writing, games, technology, and listening. Participants mentioned tasks covered in the various centers as (a) building and reading sight words and word family words, (b) building and writing sentences, (c) reading books and poetry, (d) identifying vowels, blends, letters, and letter sounds, (e) playing games that build sight word and letter/letter sound knowledge, (f) identifying story components, and (g) increasing vocabulary through the integration of social studies and science content. Teacher J integrated other content within literacy centers by having students “create sentences out of the vocabulary.” Teacher B said “I look at what standards we need to cover in the nine weeks and I pull from that and I also pull whatever our topics are.”

Some participants also acknowledged a connection between the whole group mini-lesson and the subsequent literacy center activities. Teacher F noted that, “It is a time to apply their knowledge from the mini lessons.” Teacher A commented that “If you are trying to teach a reading skill, you have to be sure you are teaching that reading

skill and they are practicing it.” Teacher K added, “If the mini lesson is on sight words or rhyming words, then the word work may be on those skills, or writing center too.”

Theme 4: Differentiation

The last theme related to literacy center task assignments was adapting learning tasks to meet a variety of student needs through differentiation. Participants recognized that their learners varied in their academic abilities and tasks should be differentiated to meet their diverse needs. With so many different ability levels, differentiation was needed to help all learners be successful. The participants believed that lower students should be working on letters and sounds, average students should be making words and writing simple sentences, while higher students were expected to write more complex sentences. This is recognized in Teacher A’s statement that “In word works, the babies only get a picture and a word by it, the other ones write a sentence. The higher ones write a story.” Teacher D had lower students match letters while other were matching sight words or spelling sight words and using them in a sentence. Teacher I also recognized the need for differentiation because:

Low kids are still working with letters, like letter matching, matching upper and lowercase letters. Two higher groups this week are doing sight word matching and when they are done they write in on a whiteboard and write sentences about it.

Some participants recognized the need for leveled readers in reading centers and Teacher F commented that her students “have their own book basket, so all the books are differentiated based on their reading level.” Teacher K also mentioned that her read to someone center is differentiated according to reading levels, with students reading texts

from a previous guided reading lesson. Teacher A shared that her lower group typically has books with just one word in them, “so they can feel they are reading a book.”

Teacher C reported the need for differentiation in a technology center as groups of students had different activities or games based on the skills they are working on. These activities varied from letter/letter sound identification for lower students to spelling sight words for higher ones. Teacher F mentioned she utilized the computer for groups of students to read leveled texts, as well as have lower students work with letters and letter sounds.

Some participants shared their differentiated approach in the listening center. While the text is the same, differentiation is noted to occur in the response to text. Teacher B had lower students respond with a picture and label, while higher students drew a picture and wrote two sentences. Teacher I shared that students are responding when lower students drew a picture and orally shared what they thought and higher students were story mapping the beginning, middle, and end.

Some participants also shared that differentiation occurred through activities that utilized a hands-on approach and manipulatives such as sorting individual letters and building with magnetic letters. Teacher B mentioned she utilized a pocketchart for students to sort upper/lowercase letters, sort rhyming words, or put word families together. Teacher C reported lower students sorted pictures for letter sounds, while Teacher D had them match letters. Teacher H commented she had students put clothespin letters in ABC order on a hanger.

Resources are provided for students as needed. Teacher H shared she had a variety of ABC charts for her students to use for the ABC order task. Teacher J stated

she had a word wall for word work and writing experiences on each table. Teacher K commented she provided sentence starters for some students at the journaling center.

One discrepant case was Teacher G's acknowledgment that her centers were not differentiated based on ability. Teacher G acknowledge that grouping is based more on social skills, whether they are getting along or talking too much. With all student completing the same task, students were encouraged to offer support to each other as needed. Teacher G further noted that she differentiated occurred as she pulled the students into reading groups.

For the second research question, *How is student progress at the literacy centers assessed?*, one theme was identified.

Theme 1: Ongoing Formal and Informal Assessments

The theme related to student progress was determining student academic knowledge throughout the school year with the ongoing use of formal and informal assessments. Participants acknowledged that assessments were needed throughout the year to determine the skills students have and have not mastered. One informal assessment consisted of teacher observation of student interactions within the literacy centers. Teacher B stated "I know they are reading because I can hear them." Teacher C mentioned that when students are engaged in technology she can see their engagement and progress. Teacher H noted that she glances around the room and if students are on task she assumes they understand the activity and are making progress.

Participants also reported that literacy work is checked each day for accuracy. Teacher C commented that "If it is something with writing or a worksheet, I look at that. I can tell if they have mastered a skill." Teacher D mentioned that small group work

gives her “A chance to know exactly where that child is struggling, what they do know, what they don’t know, what level they’re at.” Teacher J added that through writing she can assess if students are sounding out words, using capital letters and punctuation. Some participants check reader and writer journals; some have students place work in a folder. The work is either checked at the completion of centers or at the end of the day.

Participants reported that they informally assess students’ progress when they meet in guided reading groups. Teacher A commented that through guided reading groups, she was aware of where mistakes were being made and Teacher F stated that through small groups she reviewed skills and was able to determine if they were doing the work. Teacher H mentioned that through meeting in small groups she makes a determination on what skills students need to be working on. Teacher H further commented that though small group or conferencing:

I’ll notice that student A is struggling with sounding out three letter words so I need to have this student working on this skill. Or student B is having issues reading fluently through a sentence so that will be something he will need to work on.

Teachers C and E also noted the use of flashcards for letter/letter sound assessment and A, B, D, F, H, and I mentioned checklists for sight word identification. Teacher C commented that flashcards are used as a daily assessment and Teacher H used a checklist form weekly. Teacher K noted the use of GKIDS and the report card rubric, while all participants cited the use of Fountas and Pinnell to determine reading levels.

For the last research question, *What decision rules are in place to determine when children are ready to progress and move to more advanced learning activities?*, three themes were identified.

Theme 1: Skill Progression and Mastery

The first theme related to student progression through learning activities was student progression and mastery through a series of skills. Participants recognized that their students were developing reading and writing skills and it was their role to provide activities that assisted in the development and mastery of such skills. Participants acknowledged that there was a clear progression of skills and students needed to work at their ability to be successful. Teacher A viewed the progression of skills as a “reading series, you gradually add to it.” Teacher B made the connection that students “need to work on one area, they need to accomplish that area before moving on to something else.” Teacher H noted that “Literacy centers helps with their reading skills because it is a building process”, and elaborated by saying that,

At the beginning of the year you are starting out with letter sounds even in your work zones and recognizing letters and then you are putting that into making a word and then you are making that into making a sentence.

Teacher C noted that some skills are a precursor and needed to be mastered before students’ progress. Participants noted some early skills were recognizing letters and sounds, putting pictures and words together, and identifying basic sight words. Later skills were making words, writing sentences, and writing stories. Teacher C also noted that reinforcing and reviewing skills builds student motivation and success. Teacher H

agreed in that she allows her students to try to work at their own pace and does not hold any of them back.

Participants recognized that as students master skills, they need to be provided with activities that address their ability level and appropriately challenges them. Teacher C realized these learners need work that is more in depth, Teacher E believed in “pushing those who can”, Teacher F believed higher learners need opportunities to read with a “voice and fluency”, and Teacher J acknowledged she allows her students to move on to other skills as prior ones are mastered.

Theme 2: Objectivity and Subjectivity

The second theme related to student progression through learning activities was the use of objectivity and/or subjectivity in determining student advancement in learning activities. Objectivity was defined by the fact that all teachers cited the use of the formal assessment Fountas and Pinnell to determine what leveled readers students should be engaged in. A text that a student reads with 90% accuracy is considered the instructional level and used within reading groups and/or literacy centers. This guideline is followed by all teachers. All participants mentioned the use of some form of formal assessment, flashcards or checklists, to determine letter/letter sound and sight word identification. Teachers create their own flashcards and checklists to be used throughout the year. Although there is flexibility in the sight word list to use, whether Fry or Dolch, 25 words are formally assessed each quarter for report cards. This assessment is a formal checklist used by all teachers.

Objectivity was also noted as teachers commented that student work is checked for completion and accuracy. Teacher C mentioned she determines if students are

mastering skills in literacy centers by looking at the students writing or worksheets.

Teacher D stated that

When they start writing I have them label their picture and I can tell if they know
The beginning sounds, if they can sound out part or all of a word, beginning,
middle, and end sounds of a word, and I use that to determine where I am going to
go with the groups.

Teacher F added that reader journals are checked daily and Teacher H also noted that literacy journals are checked each day to “see if they have done their work and making progress.” Teacher I indicated looking at student writing and morning work for error patterns in determining student needs, while Teacher J mentioned that she looks at student work to see if they are progressing in the right directions.

Subjectivity was defined as Teachers C, E, H, I mentioned the use of observations of students working successfully independently. Teacher C indicated observing students in the technology center and Teacher H commented that while glancing around the room “The ones that are focused and working, I know they absolutely know what they are supposed to do. And then I will have those ones that are looking around and don’t really know what to do.” Teacher I remarked that she watches her students to determine if work is being completed correctly.

Subjectivity was also defined as some teachers mentioned making decisions based on what is observed in reading groups. This was seen in Teacher A’s comment that she does not use formal assessments to analyze mistakes, rather “I feel I know that by working with them in a reading group. I know where they are making mistakes.”

Teacher C noted that when students are in reading groups she is able to see what skills

they are picking up on. Teacher E added that during reading groups she “can see some kids take off and I change the groups up as needed.” Teacher F mentioned that while meeting in small group she reviews skills and can tell when students are not mastering skills. Teacher H indicated that while meeting with reading groups or conferencing with individual students she makes notations on what skills students need to be working on. Teacher I added she watches what students are doing in reading groups and “when they have gotten it I know they don’t need to work on it anymore in literacy centers. They are ready to go on.”

Subjectivity is also defined as teacher judgement is sometimes used when determining student placement in groups and learning tasks. This was seen in Teacher C’s comment if students “do not seem to be progressing as much in their group as others, I will bump them down one and then they can move back up later.” Teacher D also noted moving students

I have moved some kids from a higher group to a lower group because they have been struggling with their work and I think maybe I am pushing them too hard and I move them to a group that is moving at a slower pace. If I see a kid that is accelerating I move them to a higher group.

Teacher E said when determining if a student needs more complex tasks, she looks at the speed in which a student completes his work and “if everyone else is still working and they have already jumped up to their second center then it is pretty obvious something is pretty easy to them and they need something harder.” Teacher F remarked that students share at the end of literacy centers and a decision can be made if students did the work the correct way and exhibit an understanding of the tasks.

Theme 3: Successful Independent Learners

The third theme related to student progression through learning activities was the ability to complete tasks and be a successful independent learner. Participants recognized that students need to possess the ability to work independently in literacy centers to be successful. This success came through activities being appropriately aligned with student needs. According to Teacher A, as students are successful, “Their excitement leads to satisfaction in doing a good job.” Teacher F said successful independent learners “know where they are and what they are expected to do.” Teacher H added “They realize, I can do this and it is not as hard as I thought it was. It is kind of a self-motivator.”

Teacher Observations—Round 1

Teacher observations were analyzed first to confirm themes that emerged from interview data and then to identify additional themes. For the first research question, *How are children assigned to learning tasks at the literacy centers?*, four themes were identified from interviews and sought through observations.

Theme 1: Initial Formal and Informal Assessments

The first theme related to literacy center task assignments was determining student academic knowledge at the beginning of the year through the consistent use of formal and informal assessments. As teacher observations took place between late January and mid-February 2014, this theme was not observed.

Theme 2: Flexible Groupings

The second theme related to literacy center task assignments was opportunities for independent and collaborative learning through the varied use of flexible groupings.

Teachers A, B, F, G, H, and J utilized heterogeneous groupings while Teachers C, D, E,

I, and K opted for homogeneous. The support and assistance from student to student was seen throughout the observations. In Teacher A's class, students were grouped into a high/low student pair and lower students were copying the higher ones writing tasks. The more advanced readers were also reading text to their partner. Students engaged in two literacy centers in Teacher B's room were copying words and sentences from others. Teacher B and G had one student echo reading after a friend in the reading center. Teacher C had one student copy a classmate's blend task. In Teacher E and H's rooms, students were having difficulty reading sight words and received assistance from another student. Teacher E also had one student reminding others what to do as needed, while a student in Teacher H's was offering redirection when he observed a word task being completed incorrectly. Teacher I had a student that reviewed task directions to others and had higher students help friends complete word and sentence tasks. In Teacher J's room, students were helping classmates read individual words in a game. Teacher J and Teacher K had students help a partner read a text correctly. Teacher's D and F were discrepant cases as no student to student assistance was observed.

Independent and collaborative learning opportunities were seen during observations as well. During independent activities, students were allowed to ask for assistance from each other as needed. Independent centers were seen in some classrooms, such as Teacher B had an independent reading, computer, and listening center. Teacher D had students completing letter/letter sound tasks independently. Students were working independently with words and writing tasks in Teacher E's room. Students being independent readers and writers were observed in Teacher F's room. Teacher G had some students reading independently, while some other students were

engaged in independent word and writing tasks. Most of Teacher H's literacy tasks were independent. Teacher I also had some students reading and completing sight word and writing tasks independently. Independent centers in Teacher J's room were working with words and building sentences. A writing and listening center was utilized for independent learning in Teacher K's room.

Collaborative activities were seen as well. Teacher A utilized a collaborative approach for all as students engaged in a paired research task. Teacher B had centers supporting collaboration such as group playing of a sight word game. In Teacher C's room, students worked together completing word and writing tasks and playing a letter/picture match game. Two students were collaboratively engaged with a text on the computer and three students were assisting each other with identifying sight words on the SmartBoard. Two students in Teacher D's room were observed reading books to each other. Teacher E's students moved into reading books together when independent tasks were completed. Collaboration through a variety of literacy games, reading of books, and computer activities was observed in Teacher F's room. Teacher G had students reading together. Teacher H had some students playing a sight word identification game collaboratively. Collaboration was seen in Teacher J's room as some students played a word game together or read to each other. Teacher K had groups of students working collaboratively to play games, read books, or engage with texts on the computer.

Theme 3: Varied Learning Tasks

The third theme related to literacy center task assignments was focusing on a variety of reading skills through the intentional use of varied learning tasks. Teacher A was implementing a new approach to literacy centers during her observation. All

students not grouped with the teacher or paraprofessional were paired up and engaged in a research task, with a focus on writing and illustrating three facts/sentences.

Teacher B had students in one of seven centers. These included (a) playing a sight word game; (b) playing a letter/sound matching game and identifying missing letters in words on the computer; (c) listening to a story and responding to the characters and problem of the story; (d) highlighting sight words in a story, drawing a detailed picture, and reading leveled text; (e) researching, writing and illustrating information; (f) making CVC words belonging to the –at word family and writing sentences; and (g) reading to self or someone with leveled texts.

Students in Teacher C's room were in five groups. Tasks included (a) completing a word search and writing sight words; (b) identifying number of syllables in words and writing sentences; (c) matching letters to pictures; (d) identifying words that begin with the /tr/ blend, competing a word search and looking at non-leveled books; and (e) matching letter with sounds on computer or playing a sight word spelling game on the Smartboard.

There were two groups in teacher D's room. Both groups were identifying pictures that began with the letter k and creating a sight word booklet. One student was completing a previous task of underlining sight words and circling words that began with letter k in an emergent reader. Two students collaboratively read leveled readers.

Teacher E had three independent centers set up. First was a math center. The second consisted of students writing twenty given sight words, writing two sentences, and reading non-leveled texts. The third had students labeling pictures, writing sentences

about the pictures, then playing a variety of games including ABC order, ABC puzzles, and rhyming picture match.

Five centers were utilized in Teacher F's room. In the first, students were engaged in positional and color words, word family, sentence sequencing, visual discrimination between letters and words, and rhyming picture games. The second center was students writing and illustrating what they chose. Center three had students engaged with wipe-off book writing letters and matching rhyming pictures. The fourth center had students listening to a story and answering comprehension questions first, then playing a game matching words to pictures. The last center was read to self or someone using leveled readers.

Teacher G made use of three centers. Group one completed a short and long /o/ picture sort. Group two wrote the four weekly sight words eight times and then wrote two sentences. Group three read independently or collaboratively using leveled readers.

Five centers were employed in Teacher H's room. These included (a) playing a sight word game; (b) building sight words with magnetic letters and writing sentences; (c) finding words in magazines with three, four, five, and six letters; (d) listening to a book and responding with a picture depicting their favorite part; and (e) putting ABCs in order, writing words that begin with each with each letter of the alphabet and/or writing sentences with a word that begins with each letter.

Teacher I set up four centers. Students were engaged in (a) finding sight words; (b) stamping missing letters in words; (c) reading to self or someone using non-leveled readers; (d) building and writing a sentence based on a given picture; and (e) descrambling sight words and write the room.

Teacher J had students distributed between three centers. The first center's tasks was to use given words to make and write sentences and read leveled texts. The next center's tasks was to read leveled texts, write short /o/ CVC words under a given picture and write sentences with the words. The last center's task was listening to a text on computer and playing a game with a focus on reading CVC or CCVC words.

Five centers were used by Teacher K. Students (a) played games matching ending letters/pictures, ABC order writing ending sounds, sorting/writing /sh/ words; (b) wrote about what made them happy; (c) read collaboratively or to self with leveled readers; (d) listened to a book and drew a picture of something that happened in the story; and (e) matched upper/lowercase letters on the computer.

Table 4 displays data identifying reading skill activities connected with the five components of reading.

Table 4

Reading Skill Activities Connected With the Five Components of Reading

| Teacher | Phonics | Phonemic awareness | Vocabulary | Comprehension | Fluency |
|---------|---|---|---|--|---|
| A | Sounding out words during reading and writing tasks | * | Reading sight words from informational text Learning new words through research | Discussion of informational text read Writing new facts learned from research | Reading of informational text |
| B | Letter/sound matching Identifying missing letters in a given word Sounding out words during reading and writing tasks Building word family words | Identifying rhyming words Making new words by substituting beginning sound | Listening to text Identifying sight words Reading leveled text Learning new words through research Identifying word family words Writing sentences | Reader response Writing new facts | Multiple opportunities to read sight words Reading leveled text Reading word family words Listening to text |
| C | Sounding out words during writing tasks Letter/sound matching Sounding out blend words | Identifying number of syllables in words | Word search Writing sight words Reading blend words Identifying sight words Spelling sight words Writing sentences | Illustrating given words | Multiple opportunities to read sight words |
| D | Letter/picture match | * | Reading sight words Identifying sight words Reading leveled text | * | Reading leveled text Multiple opportunities to read sight words |
| E | Sounding out words during reading and writing tasks Letter/sound match | Identifying rhyming words | Writing sight words Reading sight words Reading sentences with other content area words Writing sentences | Text discussions | Multiple opportunities to read sight words |
| F | Discriminating between letters/words Sounding out words during reading and writing tasks | Identifying rhyming words | Identifying word family words Identifying color words Reading sight words Writing sentences | Sentence sequencing Answering comprehension questions after listening to text Word/picture match | Listening to text Reading leveled text Multiple opportunities to read sight words (<i>table continues</i>) |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|-------------------------------|---|------------------------------------|---|
| G | Sounding out words during reading and writing tasks | Short/long vowel picture sort | Writing sight words Writing sentences | Using picture cues | Reading leveled text Multiple opportunities to read sight words |
| H | Sounding out words during reading and writing tasks | * | Reading sight words Writing sight words Identifying words with certain number of letters Writing words that begin with certain letters Writing sentences Listening to text | Reader response | Multiple opportunities to read sight words Listening to text |
| I | Identifying missing letters in a given word Sounding out words during reading and writing tasks | * | Identifying sight words Reading sight words Spelling sight words Writing sentences | Word sequencing to make a sentence | Multiple opportunities to read sight words |
| J | Sounding out words during reading and writing tasks | * | Reading sight words Reading sentences with other content area words | Word sequencing to make a sentence | Reading leveled text Multiple opportunities to read sight words |
| K | Identifying ending sounds Letter/picture ending sound match Sounding out words during reading and writing tasks Letter/sound match | Digraph picture sort | Words that begin and end with digraphs Reading sight words Writing sight words Listening to text Writing sentences | Reader response | Multiple opportunities to read sight words Reading leveled text Listening to text |

Note. * = no reading skill activity identified by teacher.

An integration of social studies content was seen in some classrooms. At the time of the observations, kindergarten students were learning about American symbols. Teacher A had students engaged in a partner research project, using informational text to find, write, and illustrate three facts about an American symbol. Two centers in Teacher B's classroom integrated social studies, in one students were highlighting sight words in a Statue of Liberty story, while in the other students were utilizing informational text to write facts about and illustrate three American symbols. Teacher E had a center set up in which students labeled and wrote a sentence about six American symbols. Teachers C and I also integrated a Valentine theme within centers. Teacher C used valentine words for students to determine number of syllables and upper/lower case letters on hearts for matching, while Teacher I had students find hidden sight words in a valentine picture and finding words that began with each letter of a given valentine word (e.g. given the word HEART, students had to find a word that began with the letters h, e, a, r, t).

Theme 4: Differentiation

The last theme related to literacy center task assignments was differentiating learning tasks to meet a variety of student needs. Differentiation was seen throughout the kindergarten classrooms. Students in teachers B, D, F, G, J, and K's classrooms were observed reading leveled texts. Each student had a baggie or a box in which their books were housed. These texts were used to read to self or someone.

A hands-on approach and manipulatives were integrated throughout the classrooms. Teachers B, C, E, F, H, J, and K offered a variety of learning games, while Teacher H made use of clipping clothespins for ABC order and magnetic letter

tiles/boards for building sight words. Teachers B, D, G, and I utilized a variety of cut and paste activities. In addition, Teachers B, C, F, J, and K employed a technology center.

Teacher A also demonstrated differentiation by having a variety of leveled texts available for the research task. Teacher B allowed one student to work independently on the computer due to social problems, his tasks focused exclusively on letters and sounds. Teacher B provided a variety of leveled texts for researching and a word wall for students needing sight word and writing support. The number of sentences to be written by students varied as well. In Teacher C's room, a word wall was also available for writing support. Activities differentiated such as one student wrote sight words instead of sentences, two English language learners played a game that matched letters and pictures, and in the technology center, one group matched letters and sounds while the other group spelled sight words. Differentiation was seen in Teacher E's room through the number of sentences to be written by students and the support of a model for labeling pictures. Teacher F provided a word wall as a resource for writing assignments. Teacher G provided a model for completing a short and long /o/ picture sort and two students were asked to write letters versus sentences. Teacher H's centers were based on a series of tasks. Each student progressed through the tasks based on speed and ability. In addition, Teacher H provided ABC charts and a word wall to support tasks for those who needed it. Differentiation was seen in Teacher I's room based on the varying number of sentences written. Teacher J provided individual sight word folders for students, offering reading and writing support. Two levels of word games were available based on student reading levels, CVC or CCVC words. Teacher K also had a variety of games available, an alphabet chart to assist ABC order, and an English language learner and low learner

were given the opportunity to build alphabet knowledge through the engagement of matching upper and lowercase letters on the computer.

For the second research question, *How is student progress at the literacy centers assessed?*, one theme was initially identified.

Theme 1: Ongoing Formal and Informal Assessments

The theme related to student progress was determining student academic knowledge throughout the school year with the ongoing use of formal and informal assessments. All teachers pulled a group or groups of students during literacy centers. These students were informally assessed on reading skills at that time, as individuals were demonstrating ability to read the guided reading book independently. Teachers A, B, E, J, and K checked student work at the completion of literacy centers; Teachers C, D, F, G, and H had students put work in folders to be checked at a later time. Teacher I checked some work at the completion of centers, while others were asked to put their work in folders to be checked later. Teacher A checked in with students twice to check progress of task. Teacher B's paraprofessional and Teacher C were observed assessing student sight word knowledge using a checklist. Before conducting a guided reading group, Teacher H pulled individual students to complete running records.

For the last research question, *What decision rules are in place to determine when children are ready to progress and move to more advanced learning activities?*, three themes had been identified.

Theme 1: Skill Progression and Mastery

The first theme related to student progression through learning activities was student progression and mastery through a series of skills. A wide variety of student ability levels was noted during observations.

In Teacher A's room, some students were able to write complete sentences while others were only writing words and phrases. Eight were needing to sound out words during writing while two wrote words without the need of phonics. Five students were identifying sight words in research text, while the other five were able to read some of the sentences. Two students were reading all of the informational text to their partners. One student was observed having difficulty copying from another.

Teacher B's students varied in that two read sight words correctly, one student held a book upside down and pretended to read, one student sounded out words while reading, and a level B and C text was read fluently and correctly by two students. Two students wrote unintelligible sentences while one wrote four phonetically spelled sentences. One student correctly identified beginning sounds while one had difficulty identifying ending sounds.

In Teacher C's room, two English language learners were having difficulty matching letters and pictures correctly. Some students matching letters and beginning sounds and spelling sight words were demonstrating high levels of success, while others needed support. Three students correctly wrote and identified sight words. Complete, phonetically spelled sentences were written by three students, one wrote only sight words. Two students were pretend reading non-leveled texts.

Nine students in Teacher D's room demonstrated the ability to recognize beginning sounds. Two students attempted the beginning sounds task but did not complete it, while one student colored the picture on the worksheet only. Two students read sight words correctly and one successfully identified sight words in text. One student identified words in a text that began with the target letter k. Two students read level C texts correctly.

Teacher E's students varied in that two were reading words and two were saying letters while writing sight words. Ten students were able to sound out words and read completed sentences during writing. Correct sight word and phonetic spelling was seen by 12 students, although two of these received support from others.

Levels A, B, C, and D readers were read by students in Teacher F's room. Two students were observed having difficulty with medial vowel sounds while reading, resulting in a low fluency rate. Phonetically spelled words were noted through five students' writings. Six students identified sight and vocabulary words in games and one discriminated between letters and sounds. Four students successfully answered comprehension questions after listening to a text and matched pictures and words.

Two students in Teacher G's room were practicing writing letters. Twelve students successfully sorted long and short /o/ words, although they could not explain the sort. Four students wrote simple sentences. Level B, C, and D, readers were used by students, with three students pretend reading and one student observed sounding out words in a text.

In Teacher H's room, four students read sight words correctly during a game. In making words, three students made and read spelled sight words correctly, while three

progressed to writing phonetically spelled sentences. In the ABC center, one student struggled with ABC order, seven students were successfully writing words for each letter, and one student was writing sentences. In finding words in magazines that had three, four, five, and six letters center, five students identified words correctly, while two students were incorrect.

Five students in Teacher I's room demonstrated some difficulty with beginning sounds. Four students correctly read sight words, five descrambled sight words, three built sentences with words, and two wrote a simple sentence. Nine students engaged in reading, although text were non-leveled and students were pretend reading and discussing illustrations.

Teacher J had four students struggling with some beginning and ending sounds, while one struggled with all ending sounds. Level B, C, and D texts were read by students and one student demonstrated the ability to blend CVC words. Five students successfully built sentences with given words and three students wrote simple sentences.

In Teacher K's class, one student was unable to complete identifying an ending sound task, writing beginning sounds instead. Six students were sounding out words while writing sentences and one sounded out words while reading a level A text. A, B, and F leveled texts were read fluently by students. In a paired reading group, one student was actively reading, while the other chose to listen. Two students were able to match upper and lowercase letters.

Theme 2: Objectivity and Subjectivity

The second theme related to student progression through learning activities was the use of objectivity and or subjectivity in determining student placement in learning

activities. During observations, teachers were engaged with small groups of children for some or all of the literacy block. Teachers were working on skills based on each groups needs and reflective, student strengths/needs notes were recorded in notebooks for reference. It was noted that Teacher H used a short period of this time to formally assess some students reading levels with Fountas and Pinnell, while Teacher B's paraprofessional and Teacher C used their created checklist to assess sight word knowledge. All teachers periodically observed students working in centers and Teacher A, B, E, J, K, and I checked student work for accuracy.

Theme 3: Successful Independent Learners

The third theme related to student progression through learning activities was the ability to complete tasks and be a successful independent learner. In Teacher A's room, students were completing a new task and were unable to be successful without several redirections from the teacher.

Teacher B accepted all student work as being completed successfully. The two students on the computers were highly engaged in tasks. Three students completed their sight word task and progressed to reading, two of three students completed a research task, one completed a word family task, and three students were highly engaged in reading leveled texts.

The five students in Teacher C's room engaged in technology were on-task and successful. Four students completed the word search and progressed to writing sight words. Six students completed a syllables worksheet and three of them began to write sentences.

Three students in Teacher D's room completed their first task. Five completed all the work in their centers. Many students were off-task in centers.

In Teacher E's room, all students were highly engaged and on-task. All students completed the sight word and writing activities that were given to them. Students were also on-task with games after initial work was completed.

Eleven students in Teacher F's room played literacy games with a high degree of success. Eleven students also wrote on wipe-off books successfully. Four students were highly engaged in writing, four with the computer tasks, and four in the reading center.

Teacher G had six students complete a picture sort task. Five completed both tasks of writing sight words and sentences. Two students wrote their letters successfully, and four were able to read their leveled text independently.

Students playing a sight word game in Teacher H's class were highly engaged and successful. Four students were focused on finding words in magazines, but only one completed the task. Three students listened carefully to a story and were successful at drawing a picture of something that happened in the story. In making words, all students were engaged and three progressed to writing sentences. In the ABC center, three students were on-task and one progressed to writing sentences.

In Teacher I's room, nine students were highly engaged in the reading center. Three students completed both sight word tasks. Two students successfully descrambled a sentence and progressed to writing sentences, and five descrambled sight words and moved into the centers second task.

Ten students in the reading center in Teacher J's class were engaged with texts. Five students completed the putting words into a center task. Three successfully wrote sentences, and one was able to play a reading CVC words correctly.

Five students in Teacher K's room were able to stay on task and play literacy games correctly. Six students stayed on task and successfully wrote sentences, while six more students were engaged in reading texts. Two students were attentive to a book on tape and completed a comprehension task successfully, and two students were highly engaged with tasks on the computer.

Teacher Observations—Round 2

Four themes were initially identified for the first research question, *How are children assigned to learning tasks at the literacy centers?*

Theme 1: Initial Formal and Informal Assessments

The first theme related to literacy center task assignments was determining student academic knowledge at the beginning of the year through the consistent use of formal and informal assessments. As stated previously, teacher observations took place between late January and mid-February 2014, thus this theme was not observed.

Theme 2: Flexible Groupings

The second theme related to literacy center task assignments was opportunities for independent and collaborative learning through the varied use of flexible groupings. Teachers B, F, H, I, and K utilized heterogeneous ability groupings while Teachers A, C, D, E, G, and J choose the use of homogeneous ability groups. Student support for each other was seen throughout most classrooms. In Teacher A's class, one new student was guided along through the groups tasks by another classmate. One student in Teacher C's

and K's room were receiving support spelling sight words in the technology center. Students engaged in literacy centers in teacher B's, E's, F's, H's and K's room were receiving support from others in sounding out words during writing tasks. One student was also helping a friend sound out words during paired reading in Teacher F's room. Two students in Teacher G's room were observed helping others read sight words during a game and putting words into a sentence. Students in the reading center offered sounding out word support to friends in Teacher H's room, while echo reading was also observed from one student to another in the reading center. In Teacher J's room, two students were observed copying word family tasks from others, one student echo read word family words, one student was sounding out CVC words for a friend, and one student read sight words for others during a game. Student support was not seen in Teacher D's room.

Independent and collaborative learning opportunities were seen during observations as well. Teachers allowed students to seek and obtain assistance from each as needed in independent centers. All students were independent workers in Teacher A's room, although collaboration was noted as a student assisted a new student navigate through a series of literacy center tasks. Teacher B had independent centers with one exception, in which students were sharing a large dry erase board and working collaboratively to write sight words. In Teacher C's room, four students worked independently taking Accelerated Reader tests, while independence was also seen in the completing of two writing assignments and reading to self. Collaboration was observed during one writing assignment task, two students spelling sight words on the SmartBoard, and a paired reading group. Teacher D had students completing letter/letter sound and reading tasks independently, while six students were noted playing learning games

collaboratively. In Teacher E's room, independent writing tasks were utilized, followed by collaborative reading and playing of literacy games. Students worked independently writing and reading in Teacher F's room, with collaboration seen during the playing of literacy games, paired reading, and listening/responding to text on the computer. Independent reader response, sight word drill, and a writing task was used by some students in teacher G's room, while collaboratively reading of text, playing a sight word game, and sentence building was employed by others.

Collaboration through reading of texts and completing a vocabulary worksheet was observed in Teacher H's room; others were being independent readers and writers. Independent reading and writing was seen in Teacher I's room, while collaborations was observed during paired reading in the reading center and sight word activities on the SmartBoard. Students in Teacher J's room completed independent word family and sight word activities first, then progressed into independent or collaborative reading and collaborative games. Teacher K utilized collaborative reading groups as well as spelling sight words and building sentences on the SmartBoard. Independent activities focused on listening to text, reader response, free writing, and vocabulary activities.

Theme 3: Varied Learning Tasks

The third theme related to literacy center task assignments was focusing on a variety of reading skills through the intentional use of varied learning tasks. Teacher A had two centers in her class, both focused on writing words and illustrations that began with the letter "q". The second center had students writing sentences with these words.

Teacher B had five centers set up. These centers included (a) writing sight words; (b) writing sentences with sight words; (c) listening to and responding to stories on the

computer; (d) reading leveled readers and writing a response; and (e) identifying sight words in a poem and throughout the room.

Students in Teacher C's room were in six groups engaged in (a) descriptive writing; (b) spelling sight words on the SmartBoard or taking Accelerated Readers test; (c) identifying words and writing sentences with the -less suffix; story writing; and (d) reading emergent texts; and reading and illustrating simple sentences.

There were two groups in Teacher D's room. Both were identifying pictures that began with the letter z. One group then move into playing a variety of learning games including matching rhyming and sight words. The other group moved into reading leveled text to self.

There were three centers utilized in Teacher E's room. The first was a math center, the second writing to the prompt: "This summer I am going to...", then playing rhyming and opposite matching games, the third writing letters in ABC order, writing to the prompt: "School is fun because...", then reading non-leveled texts.

Teacher F had four literacy centers. In the first students were engaged in free writing. The second was writing on wipe-off boards and playing alphabet, sight word, and rhyming games. The third was read to self or someone using leveled readers. The last center utilized the computer and focused on students listening to and reading along with a text, then completing interactive activities.

Six centers were employed in Teacher G's room. These included (a) listening and responding to a story on tape; (b) reviewing sight words; (c) playing sight word concentration; (d) matching pictures and writing sentences using sight words; and (e) building and writing sentences from given words.

Teacher H made use of five centers. Group one was writing sentences or stories; group two was listening to a text on tape, then paired up and read leveled texts; group three was read to self or someone using leveled readers; group four was putting ABCs in order, writing words with each letter, and writing sentences with each word; and group five was identifying vocabulary.

Teacher I had students distributed between five literacy centers. The first center's task was read to self or someone using non-leveled texts and then complete a reader response paper. The second center's task was identifying and spelling sight words on the SmartBoard. The next center's task was listening and responding to a text on tape. Center four's task was free writing and the last center focused on writing sight words and sentences.

Teacher J utilized five centers, including (a) creating a spring picture; (b) completing an –ail and –ain word family task, then independent or paired reading of leveled text; (c) completing an –at word family task, then playing a game with a focus on reading consonant-vowel-consonant (CVC) or consonant-consonant-vowel-consonant CCVC words; (d) completing an –ake and –ay word family task, then paired reading of leveled texts; and (e) finding words, then playing a sight word game.

Six centers were used by Teacher K. Students (a) read to each other, completed a reader response, and read leveled texts and poetry journals; (b) listened to and responded to a text; engaged in free writing; (c) matched vocabulary to pictures and wrote missing letters in words; (d) read and illustrated a story, then wrote sentences; and (e) made sentences or built sight words on the SmartBoard.

Second round observations determined that teachers integrated phonics, phonemic awareness, comprehension, fluency, and vocabulary within and across literacy centers.

Table 5 displays data identifying reading skill activities connected with the five components of reading.

Table 5

Reading Skill Activities Connected with the Five Components of Reading

| Teacher | Phonics | Phonemic awareness | Vocabulary | Comprehension | Fluency |
|---------|--|---------------------------|---|--|---|
| A | Letter/sound matching Sounding out words during writing tasks | * | Writing sight words Writing sentences using words that begin with a letter | * | * |
| B | Sounding out words during reading and writing tasks | * | Listening to text Identifying sight words Reading leveled text Writing sight words Reading sight words Writing sentences | Reader response | Multiple opportunities to read sight words Reading leveled text Listening to text |
| C | Sounding out words during reading and writing tasks | * | Writing sight words Identifying -less words Identifying sight words Spelling sight words Writing sentences | Illustrating given sentences Accelerated reader tests Fill in the sentence | Multiple opportunities to read sight words Reading emergent texts |
| D | Letter/picture match | Identifying rhyming words | Reading sight words Identifying sight words Reading leveled text | * | Reading leveled text Multiple opportunities to read sight words |
| E | Sounding out words during reading and writing tasks | Identifying rhyming words | Writing sight words Reading sight words Writing sentences | Text discussions | Multiple opportunities to read sight words |
| F | Sounding out words during reading and writing tasks | Identifying rhyming words | Writing sentences Writing sight words Reading sight words | Answering comprehension questions after listening to text | Listening to text Reading leveled text Multiple opportunities to read sight words |
| G | Sounding out words during reading and writing tasks | Identifying rhyming words | Reading sight words Writing sentences Identifying sight words Listening to text | Reader response Word sequencing to make a sentence | Listening to text Multiple opportunities to read sight words (<i>table continues</i>) |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|--|---|--|---|
| H | Sounding out words during reading and writing tasks | * | Reading sight words Writing sight words Identifying words with certain number of letters Writing words that begin with certain letters Writing sentences Listening to text | Matching vocabulary | Multiple opportunities to read sight words Listening to text Reading leveled texts |
| I | Sounding out words during reading and writing tasks | * | Identifying sight words Reading sight words Spelling sight words Writing sentences Listening to text | Reader response | Multiple opportunities to read sight words Reading non-leveled text Listening to text |
| J | Sounding out words during reading and writing tasks | Making new words by substituting beginning sound | Reading sight words Identifying word family words | * | Reading leveled text Multiple opportunities to read sight words |
| K | Sounding out words during reading and writing tasks | Identifying missing letters in a given word | Reading sight words Writing sight words Spelling sight words Listening to text Writing sentences | Reader response Matching vocabulary Word sequencing to make a sentence | Multiple opportunities to read sight words Reading leveled text Listening to text |

Note. * = no reading skill activity identified by teacher.

An integration of science content was seen in three classrooms. At the time of observations, kindergarten students were learning about living and non-living, as well as characteristics of animal groups. Teacher F had one student engage in writing about butterflies during free writing. Teacher H had a center set up in which students read vocabulary words and determined if it was living or non-living. Teacher K integrated farm life within two centers, with students in the first matching words to illustrations and filling in missing letters in farm words. The second center engaged students in reading and illustrating a farm story. Teacher K also had some students making sentences about butterflies in technology and writing about butterflies in the free writing center.

Theme 4: Differentiation

The last theme related to literacy center task assignments was differentiating learning tasks to meet a variety of student needs. Differentiation was seen throughout the kindergarten classrooms. Students in Teachers B, C, D, F, H, J, and K's classrooms were observed reading leveled texts. Each student had their own baggie or a box for book storage. These texts were used to read to self or someone.

Meeting needs through the use of a hands-on approach and manipulatives was seen at times during observations. Teachers C, D, E, F, G, and J utilized a selection of learning games, while teacher H had some students clipping clothespin for ABC order. Teachers B, C, F, G, I, and K employed a technology center and Teachers A, D, and J used cut and paste activities for students.

Differentiation was also seen in Teacher A's room as one group was expected to write and illustrate "q" words on a crown, and the other was to write a story using "q" words. After completing a crown, students could attempt to write one sentence. Story

length varied among students. After writing stories, the group was able to complete a crown as well. Pictures beginning with the letter “q” were available as a resource for both groups.

Teacher B differentiated as one student was allowed to write words, while other group members wrote sentences. Four students copied sentences from texts, while others wrote sentences phonetically. The number of sentences written by students varied. A word wall was provided for sight word and writing support. Four students were engaged in texts based on reading level.

In Teacher C’s room, a pair of students were spelling sight words with support from the word wall. Other students in the technology center were taking Accelerated Reader tests. A model was provided for a group of students matching words and pictures ending with –less. Student writing varied in the number of sentences completed. Leveled readers were available in the reading center.

Differentiation was seen in Teacher E’s room as one student was provided with a model for completing ABC order. The number of sentences to be written by students varied. After writing sentences, six students were engaged in a variety of learning games based on their area of weakness. A group of students were matching letter and letter sounds with support from the paraprofessional.

A word wall was used for writing support and varying number of sentences was seen in Teacher F’s room. A variety of games were available to build and reinforce skills. Nine students were reading leveled texts based on their reading level.

Teacher G provided an activity focusing on putting words into a sentence, differentiation took place in the complexity of the sentences from one group to the other.

Two students were also given the activity of reviewing sight words through the use of a Language Master, a machine that reads each word to the student as they slide a card through it. Varying number of written sentences was also observed.

Teacher H differentiated tasks as some students used sentence frames for writing stories and others used them for writing single sentences. Varying number of sentences were written by students. Two students used a chart with pictures and words on it as a writing resource, while another group used the word wall and charts for finding words that began with certain letters. One student worked with finding individual words in magazines instead of writing sentences. Some students were able to sort pictures of living and non-living things, while others read and sorted words of the same.

In Teacher I's room, differentiation was observed as one student practiced writing letters while another wrote sentences. The technology centers tasks were also differentiated as some students spelled sight words using the word wall as a resource and another student matched letters and letter sounds. The number of sentences written varied as well.

Teacher J provided two levels of word games for her students based on reading levels, CVC or CVVC words. The teacher and paraprofessional offered support to individual students as needed. A sight word game was played by five students. Sight words were chosen based on student need. Leveled texts were used by groups of students as they completed center tasks.

In Teacher K's room, one student used an informational chart as a writing resource. Varied number of sentences were written in free centers. Two students used the SmartBoard to make sentences while two others spelled sight words. A model of

correctly matching words and pictures was provided for one student. Leveled texts was available for students as well.

For the second research question, *How is student progress at the literacy centers assessed?*, one theme was identified from interviews and first round observations.

Theme 1: Ongoing Formal and Informal Assessments

The theme related to student progress was determining student academic knowledge throughout the school year with the ongoing use of formal and informal assessments. Teachers A, B, C, D, F, G, and I pulled a group or groups of students during literacy centers. These students were informally assessed on reading skills at that time, as individuals were demonstrating ability to read the guided reading book independently. Teacher G left her reading group at times to address student behaviors and check task progression. Teacher J and her paraprofessional circulated throughout the literacy centers as all task assignments were new. Teacher C assessed student sight word or letter/letter sound knowledge when each reading group initially met with her. Teacher E was observed checking the sight word knowledge of one student and conducting running records on others. Before leading guided reading groups, Teacher F completed running records on two students. Running records were also conducted by Teacher H. Teacher K assessed sight word knowledge of individual students while her paraprofessional led guided reading groups. Teachers A, B, D, E, G, and H checked student work at the completion of literacy centers; Teachers C, F, and K had students put work in folders to be checked at a later time. Teacher I and J checked accuracy of student work before being allowed to proceed in playing learning games or reading texts.

For the last research question, *What decision rules are in place to determine when children are ready to progress and move to more advance learning activities?*, two themes had emerged.

Theme 1: Skill Progression and Mastery

The first theme related to student progression through learning activities was student progression and mastery through a series of skills. A range of differences in student ability levels were observed.

In Teacher A's room, one group of students were writing individual words, while another group were writing complete stories. The stories had many words spelled correctly, with other words spelled with the use of phonics. One student in the first group was observed trying to write a sentence. Although the sight words I, to, he, and do were written correctly, the other words seemed to be constructed from random letters.

Teacher B had three groups of students correctly reading sight words. One group was observed sounding out words as they began to write simple sentences, while one student wrote individual sight words instead of sentences. Four students read and copied sentences from a level B text correctly.

Two students in Teacher C's room were successfully spelling sight words, while four were testing their text comprehension skills through Accelerated Reader quizzes. One student did not successfully pass the quiz. Four students were noted sounding out describing words and two were reading and sounding out words during a sentence writing task. Five students completed story writing with the use of a graphic organizer; correct and phonetic spelling was observed. Emergent reader texts were read correctly by four

students, with one sounding out words as needed. Four students demonstrated comprehension skills by reading simple sentences and providing a matching illustration.

Twelve students in Teacher D's room demonstrated the ability to recognize beginning sounds and identify sight words in text. Three students read an emergent text fluently and accurately, while level B and C texts were read by others. Level A and C text were read with difficulty by two students.

Teacher E's students varied in that one group of students wrote stories while another group wrote two simple sentences. Correct spelling was seen at times throughout the story writing, with phonetic spelling utilized in both groups. All groups correctly read their writing during construction and at completion. Successful identification of rhyming and opposite words by six students, as well as writing ABC order by five students was observed.

Level C texts were read by nine students in Teacher F's room. One of these students demonstrated difficulty in sounding out words. Seven students correctly identified sight and rhyming words, as well as matched letter/letter sounds successfully. Six students wrote phonetically spelled sentences, while two students had difficulty sounding out words. Four students successfully read words and provided a matching illustration.

In Teacher G's room, three students were able to provide an illustration relating to their favorite part of a text. Two students were building sight word knowledge as words were read to them by a Language Master. Six other students were also reviewing sight words, although only three demonstrated success in reading the words. Success at identifying rhyming words was seen by two students, who then demonstrated ability to

write simple, phonetically spelled sentences. Two students were able to sequence 3-4 words into a sentences, while two others completed 6-9 word sentences.

Four students in Teacher H's room were writings stories and two were writing sentences. Correct and phonetic spelling was seen in both groups. One student correctly found words with 3, 4, 5, and 6 letters in magazines. Level D and F texts were each read correctly by two students. Sounding out words by two students and echo reading by one was observed. In the ABC center, six students began with writing words for each letter, while two started with writing sentences for each letter. Sentences were simple with correct and phonetic spelling. Eight students were able to sound out and sort vocabulary words successfully.

Teacher I had one student write a phonetically spelled sentence in response to a text, while another student wrote random letters. Five students were able to identify and two were able to spell sight words. One student was successfully matching letters to letter sounds. Nine students demonstrated the ability to write simple sentences with correct and phonetic spelling.

In Teacher J's room, level A, B, and C texts were read by pairs of students. Level D was unsuccessfully read by one student, although correct sounding out of some words was noted. Two students sounded out words during a word family task and one student sounded out CVC and CVVC words. Three students attempted, but were unsuccessful at sounding out these same words. Three students were able to make words that belonged to the -at word family. Three students were able to read sight words successfully, while two could not.

Level B and C texts were read by students in Teacher K's room. Four students successfully identified sight words and five wrote simple phonetically spelled sentences. One student sought help in sounding out words. Three students were able to match words to illustrations, while one required assistance from the teacher. Four students were able to read and provide an illustration to a story. Two students were successful at using words to make a sentence, while one other correctly used letters to make words. Another student was also engaged in making words, but could not complete the task without assistance.

Theme 2: Objectivity and Subjectivity

The second theme related to student progression through learning activities was the use of objectivity and or subjectivity in determining student placement in learning activities. Teachers A, B, C, D, F, G, and I were noted working with students in small groups and recording notes for individual students. Teachers C, E, I, and K used their created checklist to assess sight word knowledge, while Teachers E, F, and H used Fountas & Pinnell to determine student reading levels. All teachers periodically observed students working in centers and Teachers A, B, D, E, and G checked student work for accuracy.

Theme 3: Successful Independent Learners

The third theme related to student progression through learning activities was the ability to complete tasks and be a successful independent learner. In Teacher A's room, four students completed story writing and began writing "q" words on a crown. All six students engaged in word writing on a crown completed the task and one progressed into writing a sentence.

Teacher B had five students on task with writing sight words, two of these students began writing a second page of sight words. All six students writing sentences with sight words completed the task and six students were highly engaged on the computer. Four students were in the reading center, but only two were engaged with the text. Four students were also assigned the tasks of finding and writing sight words, two successfully completed both tasks.

Teacher C placed two students in the SmartBoard center, with the job of spelling sight words. One of these students was highly engaged with the activity. Four students took Accelerated Reader tests independently, three were attentive to the questions. Five students completed the task of writing –less words, one student progressed to filling in sentences with the words. Five students were on-task with story writing, four with reading, and four illustrating sentences.

All twelve students in Teacher D’s room completed the letter/picture matching and sight word identification tasks. One group was off task initially, eventually beginning the assignments. Six students were engaged in reading texts, with four reading successfully.

Teacher E’s students were all on task and highly engaged. All eleven students completed their writing tasks successfully, with five students also completing an ABC order assignment. Students were also engaged when playing learning games.

Six students in Teacher F’s room were playing games, four students were engaged and on-task. Five students in the reading center and four listening to stories on the computer were highly engaged. Eight students engaged in the free writing center were attentive and wrote sentences.

Teacher G had three students listen and respond successfully to a story, although one of these students began to get off task during the response activity and had to be redirected. Two students listened attentively to the reading of sight words, five completed a rhyming task and moved into writing sentences, and four were successful at building numerous sentences. Four students were experiencing difficulty playing a sight word game collaboratively.

Seven students were engaged and wrote many sentences in Teacher H's room. One student completed the task of finding words in magazines. Eight students listened carefully to a story and began to read leveled texts to each other. The reading center participants were highly engaged in reading leveled texts. Six students were writing words and two were writing sentences successfully in the ABC center. Eight students in sorting words completed the task successfully with support from each other.

In Teacher I's room, nine students were in the reading center, with six students engaged with non-leveled readers. In the technology center, five of six students were engaged in word and letter tasks. All five students in the listening center were engaged and completed a reader response. Five students in free writing were engaged and wrote sentences; three of five students in the sight word center completed both tasks of writing sight words and sentences.

Four centers in Teacher J's room involved new tasks, requiring support from the teacher and paraprofessional. All but five students attempted to complete tasks independently of the teacher and paraprofessional. Student independent success was seen as one student read CVC words in game, five students read leveled readers correctly, and two students successfully read sight words.

Two of four students in Teacher K's reading center successfully read a leveled reader and completed a reader response worksheet, while four read and responded in the listening center. Five students were successfully writing sentences and two successfully utilized the SmartBoard to make sentences from scrambled words. Successful reading of vocabulary words was demonstrated by three students, with one needing teacher support. Four students correctly read and illustrated a story, and two progressed to writing sentences. One student struggled building sight words from scrambled letters, while one student was successful.

Documents

To answer the first research question, *How are children assigned to learning tasks at the literacy centers?*, one theme was identified.

Theme 1: Initial Formal and Informal Assessments

The theme identified was determining student academic knowledge at the beginning of the year through the consistent use of formal and informal assessments. Running records are a formal assessment which is conducted at the beginning of the school year to determine a student's current reading level. Although most kindergarten students enter the research site as non-readers, some are in the beginning stages of reading and a few are proficient readers. Non-readers are considered to be letter and letter sound learners. Beginning readers can accurately read a level A or B text, which is characterized by having simple, 3-4 word, patterned, and predictable sentences. Proficient readers accurately read higher level texts with longer, more complex sentences. While percentages of students not being readers was the greatest at the start of the school year, all teachers with the exception of G had some students beginning to read as well.

Proficient readers were seen in Teachers A, E, F, H, I, and K's room. Table 6 shows percentages of non-readers, beginning readers, and proficient readers at the beginning of the kindergarten year.

Table 6

Profile Sheet Data—Comparison of Student Reading Levels by Kindergarten Teacher – Beginning of Year

| Reading levels | Teacher A | Teacher B | Teacher C | Teacher D | Teacher E | Teacher F | Teacher G | Teacher H | Teacher I | Teacher J | Teacher K | Total <i>n</i> 's |
|-------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-------------------|
| Non-Reader | 68%(17)* | 83%(20) | 76%(19) | 46%(12) | 84%(20) | 84%(20) | 100%(24) | 58%(15) | 76%(20) | 85%(20) | 92%(23) | 210 |
| Beginning Reader | 20%(5) | 17%(4) | 24%(6) | 54%(14) | 8%(2) | 0%(0) | 0%(0) | 38%(10) | 20%(5) | 15%(4) | 4%(1) | 51 |
| Proficient Reader | 12%(3) | 0%(0) | 0%(0) | 0%(0) | 8%(2) | 16%(4) | 0%(0) | 4%(1) | 4%(1) | 0%(0) | 4%(1) | 12 |

Note. * = sample *n*.

For the second research question, *How is student progress at the literacy centers assessed?*, t- one theme was identified.

Theme 1: Ongoing Formal and Informal Assessments

The theme identified was determining student academic knowledge throughout the school year with the ongoing use of formal and informal assessments. Running records are conducted throughout the year to determine students' reading levels. At mid-year, below grade-level is a non-reader or level A reader, on grade-level is a level B reader, and above is a level C reader or higher. At the end of the year, below grade-level is a non-reader or levels A, B, C reader, on grade-level is a level D reader, and above grade-level is a level E reader or higher. Teachers A, C, D, F, H, and I had the percentage of below grade-level readers increase from mid to end-of-year; Teacher D, E, and K had the percentage of students reading on grade-level increase from mid to years end; Teachers A, B, C, E, F, G, and J had the number of above grade-level readers increase by the end of the year. A composite of the overall grade-level shows below and above grade-level reading percentages increased from mid to end-of-year, while on grade-level percentages decreased. Table 7 shows percentages of students reading below, on, or above grade-level at the middle and end-of-year per teacher, while Table 8 is a grade level composite of the same.

Table 7

Profile Sheet Data—Comparison of Student Reading Levels by Kindergarten Teacher

| Reading Levels | Teacher A | | Teacher B | | Teacher C | | Teacher D | | Teacher E | | Teacher F | |
|-------------------|-----------|---------|-----------|---------|-----------|---------|-----------|---------|-----------|---------|-----------|---------|
| | MOY | EOY |
| Below Grade-Level | 25%(6)* | 27%(7) | 54%(13) | 48%(11) | 36%(9) | 39%(10) | 25%(6) | 33%(8) | 42%(10) | 32%(8) | 17%(4) | 32%(8) |
| On Grade-Level | 8%(2) | 4%(1) | 25%(6) | 4%(1) | 28%(7) | 4%(1) | 33%(8) | 42%(11) | 8%(2) | 16%(4) | 44%(11) | 16%(4) |
| Above Grade-Level | 67%(17) | 69%(17) | 21%(5) | 48%(12) | 36%(9) | 57%(4) | 42%(11) | 25%(6) | 50%(12) | 52%(12) | 39%(9) | 52%(12) |

Note. MOY=Middle of Year, EOY = End of Year; * = sample *n*.

| Reading Levels | Teacher G | | Teacher H | | Teacher I | | Teacher J | | Teacher K | | Total <i>n</i> 's | |
|-------------------|-----------|---------|-----------|---------|-----------|---------|-----------|---------|-----------|---------|-------------------|-----|
| | MOY | EOY | MOY | EOY |
| Below Grade-Level | 58%(14)* | 56%(13) | 16%(4) | 40%(10) | 12%(3) | 20%(5) | 44%(11) | 29%(7) | 42%(11) | 39%(10) | 91 | 97 |
| On Grade-Level | 21%(5) | 9%(2) | 28%(7) | 12%(3) | 32%(8) | 32%(8) | 40%(10) | 25%(6) | 21%(5) | 26%(7) | 71 | 48 |
| Above Grade-Level | 21%(5) | 35%(8) | 56%(14) | 48%(12) | 56%(15) | 48%(12) | 16%(4) | 46%(11) | 37%(9) | 35%(9) | 110 | 125 |

Note. MOY=Middle of Year, EOY = End of Year, * = sample *n*.

Table 8

Profile Sheet Data—Kindergarten Grade-Level Comparison of Reading Levels from Middle to End of Year

| Reading levels | Middle-of-year | End-of-year |
|-------------------|----------------|-------------|
| Below Grade-Level | 34%(93)* | 36%(98) |
| On Grade-Level | 26%(71) | 17%(46) |
| Above Grade-Level | 40%(109) | 47%(128) |

Note. * = sample *n*

Georgia Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills assessment is used to determine student mastery of individual reading skills. Below grade-level is demonstrated by a student that has shown no mastery or inconsistent mastery of a skill, on grade-level is demonstrated by consistent understanding of a skill, and above grade-level is taking the skill to a higher level of understanding and application. The number of reading skills assessed increases throughout the year. Teacher G was the only one that had below grade-level reading skill percentages increase from mid to end-of-year, all teachers except G had on grade-level reading skill percentages increase, and Teachers B, C, E, F, H, I, and J increased above grade-level reading skill percentages. A composite of the overall grade-level shows on and above grade-level reading skill percentages increased from mid to end-of-year, while below grade-level percentages decreased. Table 9 shows percentages of students below, on, and above grade-level in regard to overall reading skills per teacher, while Table 10 is a grade level composite. Table 11 shows percentages for each reading skill at mid-year and Table 12 shows percentages for all reading skills at the end of the year.

Table 9

Georgia Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (GKIDS) Data—Comparison of Student Reading Levels by Kindergarten Teacher

| Reading Levels | Teacher A | | Teacher B | | Teacher C | | Teacher D | | Teacher E | | Teacher F | |
|-------------------|-----------|---------|-----------|---------|-----------|---------|-----------|---------|-----------|---------|-----------|---------|
| | MOY | EOY |
| Below Grade-Level | 44%(11)* | 28%(7) | 69%(17) | 32%(7) | 41%(10) | 36%(9) | 75%(19) | 34%(9) | 38%(9) | 8%(2) | 41%(10) | 17%(5) |
| On Grade-Level | 50%(12) | 67%(17) | 27%(6) | 63%(15) | 56%(14) | 59%(15) | 25%(6) | 65%(16) | 60%(14) | 89%(21) | 59%(14) | 81%(19) |
| Above Grade-Level | 6%(2) | 5%(1) | 4%(1) | 5%(1) | 3%(1) | 5%(1) | 2%(1) | n/a | 2%(1) | 3%(1) | n/a | 2%(1) |

Note. MOY=Middle of Year, EOY = End of Year, * = sample *n*, n/a = 0%

| Reading Levels | Teacher G | | Teacher H | | Teacher I | | Teacher J | | Teacher K | | Total <i>n</i> 's | |
|-------------------|-----------|---------|-----------|---------|-----------|---------|-----------|---------|-----------|---------|-------------------|-----|
| | MOY | EOY | MOY | EOY |
| Below Grade-Level | 35%(8)* | 39%(9) | 25%(6) | 18%(5) | 37%(10) | 11%(3) | 24%(6) | 4%(1) | 26%(7) | 15%(4) | 113 | 61 |
| On Grade-Level | 64%(15) | 59%(14) | 73%(18) | 78%(20) | 61%(19) | 87%(23) | 75%(18) | 92%(22) | 72%(18) | 83%(21) | 154 | 203 |
| Above Grade-Level | 2%(1) | 1%(1) | 2%(1) | 4%(1) | 2%(1) | 3%(1) | 2%(1) | 4%(1) | 2%(1) | 2%(1) | 11 | 10 |

Note. MOY=Middle of Year, EOY = End of Year, * = sample *n*

Table 10

GKIDS Data—Kindergarten Grade-Level Comparison of Student Reading Levels From Middle to End of Year

| Reading levels | Middle-of-year | End-of-year |
|-------------------|----------------|-------------|
| Below Grade-Level | 41%(111)* | 22%(60) |
| On Grade-Level | 57%(154) | 75%(203) |
| Above Grade-Level | 2%(5) | 3%(8) |

Note. * = sample *n*

Table 11

GKIDS—Comparison of Student Reading Skills by Kindergarten Teacher—Middle of Year

| Skill/Element Description | Teacher A | | | Teacher B | | | Teacher C | | | Teacher D | | |
|---|-------------|----------|-------------|-------------|----------|-------------|-------------|----------|-------------|-------------|----------|-------------|
| | Below grade | On grade | Above grade | Below grade | On grade | Above grade | Below grade | On grade | Above grade | Below grade | On grade | Above grade |
| Answer questions about a text, retell familiar stories | 23%(6)* | 45%(11) | 32%(8) | 80%(19) | 20%(5) | n/a | 52%(13) | 48%(12) | n/a | 71%(18) | 29%(7) | n/a |
| Recognize common types of texts | 100%(25) | n/a | n/a | 84%(20) | 16%(4) | n/a | 88%(22) | 12%(3) | n/a | 10%(3) | 90%(22) | n/a |
| Describe the role of the author and illustrations in a text | 42%(10) | 59%(15) | n/a | 84%(20) | 16%(4) | n/a | 32%(8) | 68%(17) | n/a | 90%(22) | 10%(3) | n/a |
| Actively engage in group reading activities | 37%(9) | 64%(16) | n/a | 28%(7) | 72%(17) | n/a | 64%(16) | 36%(9) | n/a | 76%(19) | 24%(6) | n/a |
| Identify front and back cover, and title page | 32%(8) | 68%(17) | n/a | 20%(5) | 80%(19) | n/a | 28%(7) | 72%(18) | n/a | n/a | 100%(25) | n/a |
| Identify the reasons an author gives to support points | 73%(18) | 27%(7) | n/a | 64%(15) | 36%(9) | n/a | 52%(13) | 48%(12) | n/a | 100%(25) | n/a | n/a |
| Identify similarities and differences in two texts | 59%(15) | 41%(10) | n/a | 68%(16) | 32%(8) | n/a | 100%(25) | n/a | n/a | 100%(25) | n/a | n/a |
| Follows left-right, top-bottom, page-by-page | 28%(7) | 73%(18) | n/a | 88%(21) | 12%(3) | n/a | 4%(1) | 96%(24) | n/a | 29%(7) | 71%(18) | n/a |

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---------|---------|--------|----------|---------|-----|---------|---------|--------|----------|---------|-----|
| Spoken words are represented by sequence of letters | 37%(9) | 64%(16) | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | n/a | 4%(1) | 96%(24) | n/a | 5%(1) | 95%(24) | n/a |
| Recognize upper- and lower-case letters | 55%(14) | 45%(11) | n/a | 44%(11) | 56%(13) | n/a | 12%(3) | 88%(22) | n/a | 10%(3) | 90%(22) | n/a |
| Recognize and produce rhyming words | 41%(10) | 59%(15) | n/a | 80%(19) | 20%(5) | n/a | 36%(9) | 64%(16) | n/a | 71%(18) | 29%(7) | n/a |
| Count, pronounce, blend, and segment syllables | 37%(9) | 64%(16) | n/a | 76%(18) | 24%(6) | n/a | 72%(18) | 28%(7) | n/a | 96%(24) | 5%(1) | n/a |
| Blend and segment onsets and rimes | 36%(9) | 64%(16) | n/a | 60%(14) | 40%(10) | n/a | 20%(5) | 80%(20) | n/a | 91%(23) | 10%(2) | n/a |
| Pronounce initial, medial vowel, and final sounds | 54%(14) | 45%(11) | n/a | 72%(17) | 28%(7) | n/a | 32%(8) | 68%(17) | n/a | 81%(20) | 19%(5) | n/a |
| Produce sounds for consonants and vowels | 37%(9) | 27%(7) | 36%(9) | 52%(12) | 48%(12) | n/a | 24%(6) | 64%(16) | 12%(3) | 81%(20) | 19%(5) | n/a |
| Read common high-frequency words by sight | 59%(15) | 41%(10) | n/a | 72%(17) | 28%(7) | n/a | 48%(12) | 52%(13) | n/a | 76%(19) | 24%(6) | n/a |
| Draw, dictate, and write to narrate an event | 50%(13) | 50%(13) | n/a | 72%(17) | 28%(7) | n/a | 92%(23) | 8%(2) | n/a | 100%(25) | n/a | n/a |
| Explores digital tools to produce and publish writing | 50%(13) | 50%(13) | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | n/a | 56%(14) | 44%(11) | n/a | 100%(25) | n/a | n/a |

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---------|---------|--------|----------|--------|--------|---------|---------|---------|----------|--------|-----|
| Participate in shared research and writing projects | 32%(8) | 68%(17) | n/a | 76%(18) | 24%(6) | n/a | 56%(14) | 44%(11) | n/a | 91%(23) | 10%(2) | n/a |
| Print many upper- and lower-case letters | 5%(1) | 23%(16) | 73%(8) | 32%(8) | 36%(9) | 32%(7) | n/a | 36%(9) | 64%(16) | 62%(16) | 38%(9) | n/a |
| Use frequently occurring nouns/verbs; form plurals | 6%(9) | 64%(16) | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | n/a | 8%(2) | 92%(23) | n/a | 100%(25) | n/a | n/a |
| Understand and use question words | 36%(9) | 64%(16) | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | n/a | 20%(5) | 80%(20) | n/a | 100%(25) | n/a | n/a |
| Use the more frequently occurring prepositions | 32%(8) | 68%(17) | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | n/a | 20%(5) | 80%(20) | n/a | 95%(24) | 5%(1) | n/a |
| Capitalize words and name end punctuation | 68%(17) | 32%(8) | n/a | 64%(15) | 36%(9) | n/a | 96%(24) | 4%(1) | n/a | 100%(25) | n/a | n/a |
| Spell phonetically; letters for consonant/vowel sounds | 41%(10) | 41%(10) | 18%(5) | 68%(16) | 32%(8) | n/a | 68%(17) | 24%(6) | 8%(2) | 100%(25) | n/a | n/a |
| Sort common objects into categories | 45%(11) | 55%(14) | n/a | 76%(18) | 24%(6) | n/a | 4%(1) | 96%(24) | n/a | 95%(24) | 5%(1) | n/a |
| Relate verbs and adjectives to their opposites; distinguish verb meanings | 64%(16) | 36%(9) | n/a | 64%(15) | 36%(9) | n/a | 16%(4) | 84%(21) | n/a | 100%(25) | n/a | n/a |

Note. * = sample *n*; n/a = 0%

(table continues)

| Skill/Element Description | Teacher E | | | Teacher F | | | Teacher G | | | Teacher H | | |
|---|-------------|----------|-------------|-------------|----------|-------------|-------------|----------|-------------|-------------|----------|-------------|
| | Below Grade | On Grade | Above Grade | Below Grade | On Grade | Above Grade | Below Grade | On Grade | Above Grade | Below Grade | On Grade | Above Grade |
| Answer questions about a text, retell familiar stories | 25%(6)* | 46%(11) | 29%(7) | 16%(4) | 84%(20) | n/a | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | 13%(3) | 87%(22) | n/a |
| Recognize common types of texts | 29%(7) | 71%(17) | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | n/a | 9%(2) | 91%(22) | n/a | n/a | 100%(25) | n/a |
| Describe the role of the author and illustrations in a text | 37%(9) | 63%(15) | n/a | 4%(1) | 96%(23) | n/a | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | 4%(1) | 96%(24) | n/a |
| Actively engage in group reading activities | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | 4%(1) | 96%(24) | n/a |
| Identify front and back cover, and title page | 33%(8) | 67%(16) | n/a | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | 4%(1) | 96%(23) | n/a | 9%(2) | 91%(23) | n/a |
| Identify the reasons an author gives to support points | 100%(24) | n/a | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | n/a | 96%(23) | 4%(1) | n/a | 87%(22) | 13%(3) | n/a |
| Identify similarities and differences in two texts | 71%(17) | 29%(7) | n/a | 72%(17) | 28%(7) | n/a | 4%(1) | 96%(23) | n/a | 48%(12) | 52%(13) | n/a |
| Follows left-right, top-bottom, page-by-page | 17%(4) | 83%(20) | n/a | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | 13%(3) | 87%(22) | n/a |
| Spoken words are represented by sequence of letters | 4%(1) | 96%(23) | n/a | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | 9%(2) | 91%(23) | n/a |

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---------|----------|-----|----------|----------|--------|----------|----------|--------|---------|----------|--------|
| Recognize upper- and lower-case letters | 25%(6) | 75%(18) | n/a | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | 26%(7) | 74%(18) | n/a |
| Recognize and produce rhyming words | 42%(10) | 58%(14) | n/a | 68%(16) | 32%(8) | n/a | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | 8%(2) | 91%(23) | n/a |
| Count, pronounce, blend, and segment syllables | 58%(14) | 42%(10) | n/a | 80%(19) | 20%(5) | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | n/a | n/a | 100%(25) | n/a |
| Blend and segment onsets and rimes | 66%(16) | 33%(8) | n/a | 80%(19) | 20%(5) | n/a | 13%(3) | 87%(21) | n/a | 27%(7) | 83%(18) | n/a |
| Pronounce initial, medial vowel, and final sounds | 67%(16) | 33%(8) | n/a | 72%(17) | 28%(7) | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | n/a | 39%(10) | 61%(15) | n/a |
| Produce sounds for consonants and vowels | 21%(5) | 79%(19) | n/a | 60%(14) | 28%(7) | 12%(3) | 13%(3) | 57%(12) | 36%(9) | 18%(5) | 57%(14) | 26%(6) |
| Read common high-frequency words by sight | 46%(11) | 54%(13) | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | n/a | 70%(17) | 30%(7) | n/a | 43%(11) | 53%(14) | n/a |
| Draw, dictate, and write to narrate an event | 33%(8) | 67%(16) | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | n/a | 74%(18) | 26%(6) | n/a | 17%(4) | 83%(21) | n/a |
| Explores digital tools to produce and publish writing | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | 4%(1) | 96%(23) | n/a | n/a | 100%(25) | n/a |
| Participate in shared research and writing projects | 25%(6) | 75%(18) | n/a | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | 4%(1) | 96%(23) | n/a | n/a | 100%(25) | n/a |

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---------|----------|--------|---------|---------|-----|---------|----------|--------|----------|----------|--------|
| Print many upper- and lower-case letters | 25%(6) | 63%(15) | 13%(3) | 25%(6) | 75%(18) | n/a | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | 4%(1) | 64%(16) | 32%(8) |
| Use frequently occurring nouns/verbs; form plurals | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | 32%(8) | 68%(18) | n/a | 96%(23) | 4%(1) | n/a | 74%(19) | 26%(6) | n/a |
| Understand and use question words | 79%(19) | 21%(5) | n/a | 20%(5) | 80%(19) | n/a | 96%(23) | 4%(1) | n/a | 17%(4) | 83%(21) | n/a |
| Use the more frequently occurring prepositions | 58%(14) | 42%(10) | n/a | 44%(11) | 56%(13) | n/a | 70%(17) | 30%(7) | n/a | 39%(10) | 61%(15) | n/a |
| Capitalize words and name end punctuation | 54%(13) | 46%(11) | n/a | 54%(13) | 46%(11) | n/a | 96%(23) | 4%(1) | n/a | 39%(10) | 61%(15) | n/a |
| Spell phonetically; letters for consonant/vowel sounds | 42%(10) | 54%(13) | 4%(1) | 48%(12) | 52%(12) | n/a | 78%(19) | 4%(1) | 18%(4) | 39%(10) | 43%(11) | 17%(4) |
| Sort common objects into categories | 4%(1) | 96%(23) | n/a | 5%(1) | 95%(23) | n/a | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | n/a | 100%(25) | n/a |
| Relate verbs and adjectives to their opposites; distinguish verb meanings | 62%(15) | 38%(9) | n/a | 16%(4) | 84%(20) | n/a | 4%(1) | 96%(23) | n/a | 100%(25) | n/a | n/a |

Note. * = sample *n*; n/a = 0%

(table continues)

| Skill/Element Description | Teacher I | | | Teacher J | | | Teacher K | | | Total n's | | |
|---|-------------|----------|-------------|-------------|----------|-------------|-------------|----------|-------------|-------------|----------|-------------|
| | Below grade | On grade | Above grade | Below grade | On grade | Above grade | Below grade | On grade | Above grade | Below grade | On grade | Above grade |
| Answer questions about a text, retell familiar stories | 88%(23)* | 12%(3) | n/a | 46%(9) | 54%(15) | n/a | 8%(2) | 92%(23) | n/a | 103 | 153 | 15 |
| Recognize common types of texts | 16%(4) | 84%(22) | n/a | 21%(5) | 79%(19) | n/a | n/a | 100%(25) | n/a | 89 | 179 | n/a |
| Describe the role of the author and illustrations in a text | n/a | 100%(26) | n/a | 4%(1) | 96%(23) | n/a | n/a | 100%(25) | n/a | 62 | 199 | n/a |
| Actively engage in group reading activities | 28%(7) | 72%(19) | n/a | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | n/a | 100%(25) | n/a | 59) | 212 | n/a |
| Identify front and back cover, and title page | 20%(5) | 80%(21) | n/a | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | 33%(8) | 67%(17) | n/a | 44 | 227 | n/a |
| Identify the reasons an author gives to support points | 40%(10) | 60%(16) | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | n/a | 25%(6) | 75%(19) | n/a | 204 | 217 | n/a |
| Identify similarities and differences in two texts | 32%(8) | 68%(18) | n/a | 4%(1) | 96%(23) | n/a | 71%(18) | 29%(7) | n/a | 155 | 116 | n/a |
| Follows left-right, top-bottom, page-by-page | n/a | 100%(26) | n/a | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | 13%(3) | 88%(22) | n/a | 46 | 225 | n/a |
| Spoken words are represented by sequence of letters | 60%(16) | 40%(10) | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | n/a | 8%(2) | 92%(23) | n/a | 80 | 191 | n/a |

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|----------|----------|-------|---------|----------|-------|---------|----------|--------|-----|-----|-----|
| Recognize upper- and lower-case letters | 84%(22) | 16%(4) | n/a | 8%(2) | 92%(22) | n/a | 34%(9) | 67%(16) | n/a | 77 | 194 | n/a |
| Recognize and produce rhyming words | 100%(26) | n/a | n/a | 17%(4) | 83%(20) | n/a | 29%(7) | 71%(18) | n/a | 101 | 150 | n/a |
| Count, pronounce, blend, and segment syllables | 100%(26) | n/a | n/a | 96%(22) | 4%(1) | 5%(1) | 8%(2) | 92%(23) | n/a | 176 | 94 | 1 |
| Blend and segment onsets and rimes | 100%(26) | n/a | n/a | 21%(5) | 79%(19) | n/a | 29%(7) | 71%(18) | n/a | 134 | 137 | n/a |
| Pronounce initial, medial vowel, and final sounds | 40%(10) | 60%(16) | n/a | 21%(5) | 79%(19) | n/a | 25%(6) | 75%(19) | n/a | 147 | 124 | n/a |
| Produce sounds for consonants and vowels | 20%(5) | 72%(19) | 8%(2) | 8%(2) | 92%(22) | n/a | 34%(9) | 50%(12) | 16%(4) | 90 | 145 | 36 |
| Read common high-frequency words by sight | 28%(7) | 72%(19) | n/a | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | 54%(14) | 46%(11) | n/a | 147 | 124 | n/a |
| Draw, dictate, and write to narrate an event | 20%(5) | 80%(21) | n/a | 21%(5) | 79%(19) | n/a | 50%(13) | 50%(12) | n/a | 155 | 117 | n/a |
| Explores digital tools to produce and publish writing | n/a | 100%(26) | n/a | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | n/a | 100%(25) | n/a | 77 | 195 | n/a |
| Participate in shared research and writing projects | 20%(5) | 80%(21) | n/a | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | 29%(7) | 71%(18) | n/a | 82 | 179 | n/a |

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---------|---------|--------|----------|----------|--------|----------|----------|--------|-----|-----|-----|
| Print many upper- and lower-case letters | 8%(2) | 68%(18) | 24%(6) | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | n/a | 83%(21) | 17%(4) | 40 | 179 | 52 |
| Use frequently occurring nouns/verbs; form plurals | 36%(9) | 64%(17) | n/a | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | 17%(4) | 83%(21) | n/a | 123 | 143 | n/a |
| Understand and use question words | 52%(14) | 48%(12) | n/a | 17%(4) | 83%(20) | n/a | 29%(7) | 71%(18) | n/a | 130 | 132 | n/a |
| Use the more frequently occurring prepositions | 20%(5) | 80%(21) | n/a | 21%(5) | 79%(19) | n/a | 21%(5) | 79%(19) | n/a | 128 | 142 | n/a |
| Capitalize words and name end punctuation | 20%(5) | 80%(21) | n/a | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | 42%(11) | 58%(14) | n/a | 156 | 115 | n/a |
| Spell phonetically; letters for consonant/vowel sounds | 32%(8) | 64%(17) | 4%(1) | 25%(6) | 58%(14) | 17%(4) | 67%(17) | 21%(5) | 13%(3) | 150 | 97 | 23 |
| Sort common objects into categories | 4%(1) | 96%(25) | n/a | 8%(2) | 92%(22) | n/a | n/a | 100%(25) | n/a | 59 | 212 | n/a |
| Relate verbs and adjectives to their opposites; distinguish verb meanings | 36%(9) | 64%(17) | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | n/a | 100%(25) | n/a | n/a | 163 | 108 | n/a |

Note. * = sample *n*, n/a = 0%

Table 12

GKIDS—Comparison of Reading Skills by Kindergarten Teacher—End of Year

| Skill/Element Description | Teacher A | | | Teacher B | | | Teacher C | | | Teacher D | | |
|---|-------------|----------|-------------|-------------|----------|-------------|-------------|----------|-------------|-------------|----------|-------------|
| | Below grade | On grade | Above grade | Below grade | On grade | Above grade | Below grade | On grade | Above grade | Below grade | On grade | Above grade |
| Answer questions about a text, retell familiar stories | 20%(5) | 31%(8) | 50%(12) | 68%(16) | 4%(1) | 28%(7) | 24%(6) | 28%(7) | 48%(12) | 33%(8) | 54%(14) | 13%(3) |
| Ask and answer questions about words in a text | 27%(7) | 73%(18) | n/a | 60%(14) | 40%(7) | n/a | 56%(14) | 44%(11) | n/a | 42%(11) | 58%(14) | n/a |
| Recognize common types of texts | 39%(10) | 62%(15) | n/a | 28%(7) | 72%(17) | n/a | 84%(21) | 16%(4) | n/a | n/a | 100%(25) | n/a |
| Describe the role of the author and illustrations in a text | 27%(7) | 73%(18) | n/a | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | 28%(7) | 72%(18) | n/a | 33%(8) | 67%(17) | n/a |
| Compare and contrast experience of characters in stories | 35%(9) | 65%(16) | n/a | 56%(13) | 44%(11) | n/a | 60%(15) | 40%(10) | n/a | 63%(16) | 38%(9) | n/a |
| Actively engage in group reading activities | 12%(3) | 88%(22) | n/a | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | 44%(11) | 56%(14) | n/a | 33%(8) | 67%(17) | n/a |
| Answers questions about and describe informational texts | 27%(7) | 73%(18) | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | n/a | 24%(6) | 76%(19) | n/a | 50%(13) | 50%(12) | n/a |

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|---------|---------|-----|---------|----------|-----|---------|---------|-------|---------|----------|-----|
| Identify front cover, back cover, and title page | 12%(3) | 88%(22) | n/a | 4%(1) | 96%(23) | n/a | 24%(6) | 76%(19) | n/a | n/a | 100%(25) | n/a |
| Identify the reasons an author gives to support points | 39%(10) | 62%(15) | n/a | 36%(9) | 64%(15) | n/a | 48%(12) | 52%(13) | n/a | 71%(18) | 29%(7) | n/a |
| Identify similarities and differences in two texts | 31%(8) | 69%(17) | n/a | 36%(9) | 64%(15) | n/a | 44%(11) | 60%(14) | n/a | 25%(6) | 75%(19) | n/a |
| Follows left-right, top-bottom, page-by-page | 12%(3) | 88%(22) | n/a | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | 4%(1) | 96%(24) | n/a | n/a | 100%(25) | n/a |
| Spoken words are represented by sequence of letters | 4%(1) | 96%(25) | n/a | 20%(5) | 80%(19) | n/a | 8%(2) | 92%(23) | n/a | n/a | 100%(25) | n/a |
| Recognize and name upper- and lower-case letters | 23%(6) | 77%(19) | n/a | 16%(4) | 84%(20) | n/a | 8%(2) | 92%(23) | n/a | n/a | 100%(25) | n/a |
| Recognize and produce rhyming words | 39%(10) | 62%(15) | n/a | 12%(3) | 88%(21) | n/a | 40%(10) | 60%(15) | n/a | 42%(11) | 58%(14) | n/a |
| Count, pronounce, blend, and segment syllables | 23%(6) | 77%(19) | n/a | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | 20%(5) | 72%(18) | 8%(2) | 80%(20) | 20%(5) | n/a |
| Blend and segment onsets and rimes | 27%(7) | 73%(18) | n/a | 28%(7) | 72%(17) | n/a | 24%(6) | 76%(19) | n/a | 71%(18) | 29%(7) | n/a |
| Pronounce initial, medial vowel, and final sounds | 27%(7) | 73%(18) | n/a | 60%(14) | 40%(7) | n/a | 28%(7) | 72%(18) | n/a | 34%(9) | 67%(16) | n/a |

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---------|---------|--------|---------|----------|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|----------|--------|
| Add/substitute individual sounds to make new words | 31%(8) | 69%(17) | n/a | 64%(15) | 36%(9) | n/a | 84%(21) | 16%(4) | n/a | 38%(10) | 63%(15) | n/a |
| Produce sounds for consonants and vowels | 37%(9) | 27%(7) | 36%(9) | 44%(11) | 28%(7) | 28%(6) | 20%(5) | 28%(7) | 52%(13) | 34%(9) | 42%(11) | 25%(5) |
| Read common high-frequency words by sight | 16%(4) | 85%(21) | n/a | 36%(9) | 64%(15) | n/a | 28%(7) | 72%(18) | n/a | 25%(5) | 75%(20) | n/a |
| Distinguish between similarly spelled words | 31%(8) | 69%(17) | n/a | 48%(12) | 52%(12) | n/a | 36%(9) | 64%(15) | n/a | 75%(20) | 25%(5) | n/a |
| Read emergent-reader texts with understanding | 23%(6) | 77%(19) | n/a | 36%(9) | 64%(14) | n/a | 36%(9) | 64%(16) | n/a | n/a | 100%(25) | n/a |
| Draw, dictate and write to compose opinion pieces | 24%(6) | 77%(19) | n/a | 68%(16) | 32%(8) | n/a | 52%(13) | 48%(12) | n/a | 75%(20) | 25%(5) | n/a |
| Draw, dictate, and write to compose informative texts | 19%(5) | 81%(20) | n/a | 52%(12) | 48%(12) | n/a | 28%(7) | 72%(18) | n/a | 17%(4) | 83%(21) | n/a |
| Draw, dictate, and write to narrate an event | 23%(6) | 77%(19) | n/a | 24%(6) | 76%(18) | n/a | 36%(9) | 64%(16) | n/a | 33%(8) | 67%(17) | n/a |
| Respond to suggestions from peers to improve writing | 42%(11) | 58%(14) | n/a | 68%(16) | 32%(8) | n/a | 84%(21) | 16%(4) | n/a | 92%(23) | 8%(2) | n/a |
| Explores digital tools to produce and publish writing | 31%(8) | 69%(17) | n/a | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | 44%(11) | 56%(14) | n/a | n/a | 100%(25) | n/a |

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---------|---------|---------|----------|----------|---------|---------|---------|---------|----------|----------|--------|
| Participate in shared research and writing projects | 31%(8) | 69%(17) | n/a | 12%(3) | 88%(21) | n/a | 40%(10) | 60%(15) | n/a | 38%(10) | 63%(15) | n/a |
| Participate in collaborative conversations | 35%(9) | 65%(16) | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | n/a | 32%(8) | 68%(17) | n/a | 25%(5) | 75%(20) | n/a |
| Ask/answer questions about information presented orally | 33%(8) | 65%(17) | n/a | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | 16%(4) | 84%(21) | n/a | 25%(5) | 100%(20) | n/a |
| Describe familiar people, places, things, and events | 31%(8) | 69%(17) | n/a | 4%(1) | 96%(23) | n/a | 24%(6) | 76%(19) | n/a | 25%(5) | 75%(20) | n/a |
| Print many upper- and lower-case letters | 4%(1) | 12%(3) | 85%(21) | 8%(2) | n/a | 92%(22) | n/a | 24%(6) | 76%(19) | 46%(12) | 33%(8) | 21%(5) |
| Use frequently occurring nouns/verbs; form plurals | 19%(5) | 81%(20) | n/a | 28%(7) | 72%(17) | n/a | 12%(3) | 88%(22) | n/a | n/a | 100%(25) | n/a |
| Understand and use question words | 16%(4) | 85%(21) | n/a | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | 24%(6) | 76%(19) | n/a | 13%(3) | 88%(22) | n/a |
| Use the more frequently occurring prepositions | 15%(4) | 85%(21) | n/a | 28%(7) | 72%(17) | n/a | 24%(6) | 76%(19) | n/a | 12%(3) | 88%(22) | n/a |
| Produce and expand complete sentences | 19%(5) | 81%(20) | n/a | 72%(17) | 28%(7) | n/a | 28%(7) | 72%(18) | n/a | n/a | 100%(25) | n/a |
| Capitalize words and name end punctuation | 70%(18) | 31%(7) | n/a | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | 80%(20) | 20%(5) | n/a | 100%(25) | n/a | n/a |

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---------|---------|---------|---------|----------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|----------|--------|
| Spell phonetically; letters for consonant/vowel sounds | 20%(5) | 38%(10) | 42%(10) | 12%(3) | 24%(6) | 64%(15) | 40%(10) | 8%(2) | 52%(13) | 58%(14) | 25%(5) | 17%(6) |
| Identify new meanings for familiar words; use acquired words and phrases | 46%(12) | 54%(13) | n/a | 56%(13) | 44%(11) | n/a | 36%(9) | 64%(16) | n/a | 33%(8) | 67%(17) | n/a |
| Use inflections and affixes as a clue to meaning of a word | 65%(16) | 35%(9) | n/a | 52%(12) | 48%(12) | n/a | 60%(15) | 40%(10) | n/a | 33%(8) | 67%(17) | n/a |
| Sort common objects into categories | 15%(4) | 85%(21) | n/a | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | 8%(2) | 92%(23) | n/a | n/a | 100%(25) | n/a |
| Relate verbs and adjectives to their opposites; distinguish verb meanings | 47%(12) | 54%(13) | n/a | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | 44%(11) | 56%(14) | n/a | 75%(20) | 25%(5) | n/a |

Note. * = sample *n*, n/a = 0%.

(table continues)

| Skill/Element Description | Teacher E | | | Teacher F | | | Teacher G | | | Teacher H | | |
|---|-------------|----------|-------------|-------------|----------|-------------|-------------|----------|-------------|-------------|----------|-------------|
| | Below Grade | On Grade | Above Grade | Below Grade | On Grade | Above Grade | Below Grade | On Grade | Above Grade | Below Grade | On Grade | Above Grade |
| Answer questions about a text, retell familiar stories | 12%(3) | 60%(14) | 28%(7) | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | 8%(2) | 78%(18) | 13%(4) | 19%(5) | 23%(6) | 58%(9) |
| Ask and answer questions about words in a text | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | 18%(4) | 83%(19) | n/a | 19%(5) | 81%(20) | n/a |
| Recognize common types of texts | 4%(1) | 96%(23) | n/a | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | 22%(5) | 78%(19) | n/a | 16%(4) | 85%(21) | n/a |
| Describe the role of the author and illustrations in a text | 8%(2) | 92%(22) | n/a | 4%(1) | 96%(23) | n/a | 4%(1) | 96%(23) | n/a | 16%(4) | 85%(21) | n/a |
| Compare and contrast experience of characters in stories | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | 21%(5) | 78%(19) | n/a | 23%(6) | 77%(19) | n/a |
| Actively engage in group reading activities | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | 8%(2) | 91%(22) | n/a | n/a | 100%(25) | n/a |
| Answers questions about and describe informational texts | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | 13%(3) | 87%(21) | n/a | 16%(4) | 85%(21) | n/a |
| Identify front cover, back cover, and title page | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | 4%(1) | 96%(23) | n/a | 12%(3) | 88%(22) | n/a |
| Identify the reasons an author gives to support points | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | 56%(13) | 43%(11) | n/a | 20%(5) | 80%(20) | n/a |

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|--------|----------|-----|---------|---------|--------|---------|---------|-----|--------|---------|--------|
| Identify similarities and differences in two texts | 12%(3) | 88%(21) | n/a | 35%(8) | 65%(16) | n/a | 8%(2) | 91%(22) | n/a | 23%(6) | 77%(19) | n/a |
| Follows left-right, top-bottom, page-by-page | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | 4%(1) | 96%(23) | n/a | 8%(2) | 91%(22) | n/a | 12%(3) | 88%(22) | n/a |
| Spoken words are represented by sequence of letters | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | 4%(1) | 96%(23) | n/a | 4%(1) | 96%(23) | n/a | 12%(3) | 88%(22) | n/a |
| Recognize and name upper- and lower-case letters | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | 8%(2) | 92%(23) | n/a | 17%(4) | 83%(20) | n/a | 15%(4) | 85%(21) | n/a |
| Recognize and produce rhyming words | 8%(2) | 92%(22) | n/a | 35%(8) | 65%(16) | n/a | 17%(4) | 83%(20) | n/a | 16%(4) | 85%(21) | n/a |
| Count, pronounce, blend, and segment syllables | 24%(6) | 76%(18) | n/a | 23%(6) | 77%(18) | n/a | 35%(8) | 65%(16) | n/a | 15%(4) | 85%(21) | n/a |
| Blend and segment onsets and rimes | 24%(6) | 76%(18) | n/a | 23%(6) | 77%(18) | n/a | 22%(5) | 78%(19) | n/a | 23%(6) | 77%(19) | n/a |
| Pronounce initial, medial vowel, and final sounds | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | 19%(5) | 81%(19) | n/a | 61%(15) | 39%(9) | n/a | 28%(7) | 73%(18) | n/a |
| Add/substitute individual sounds to make new words | 20%(5) | 80%(19) | n/a | 8%(2) | 92%(22) | n/a | 69%(17) | 30%(7) | n/a | 27%(7) | 73%(18) | n/a |
| Produce sounds for consonants and vowels | 12%(3) | 88%(21) | n/a | 58%(14) | 31%(7) | 12%(3) | 34%(8) | 65%(16) | n/a | 15%(4) | 65%(16) | 19%(5) |

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|--------|----------|-----|---------|----------|-----|----------|---------|-----|---------|----------|-----|
| Read common high-frequency words by sight | 12%(3) | 88%(21) | n/a | 96%(23) | 4%(1) | n/a | 47%(11) | 52%(13) | n/a | 38%(10) | 62%(15) | n/a |
| Distinguish between similarly spelled words | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | 85%(20) | 15%(4) | n/a | 74%(18) | 26%(6) | n/a | 23%(6) | 77%(19) | n/a |
| Read emergent-reader texts with understanding | 12%(3) | 88%(21) | n/a | 23%(6) | 77%(18) | n/a | 64%(15) | 35%(9) | n/a | 15%(4) | 85%(21) | n/a |
| Draw, dictate and write to compose opinion pieces | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | 8%(2) | 92%(22) | n/a | 95%(23) | 4%(1) | n/a | 19%(5) | 81%(20) | n/a |
| Draw, dictate, and write to compose informative texts | 4%(1) | 96%(23) | n/a | 20%(5) | 80%(19) | n/a | 91%(22) | 9%(2) | n/a | 19%(5) | 81%(20) | n/a |
| Draw, dictate, and write to narrate an event | 4%(1) | 96%(23) | n/a | 12%(3) | 88%(21) | n/a | 65%(17) | 35%(7) | n/a | 19%(5) | 81%(20) | n/a |
| Respond to suggestions from peers to improve writing | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | n/a | 15%(4) | 85%(21) | n/a |
| Explores digital tools to produce and publish writing | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | 21%(5) | 78%(19) | n/a | n/a | 100%(25) | n/a |
| Participate in shared research and writing projects | 12%(3) | 88%(21) | n/a | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | 17%(4) | 83%(20) | n/a | n/a | 100%(25) | n/a |
| Participate in collaborative conversations | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | 30%(7) | 70%(17) | n/a | 8%(2) | 92%(23) | n/a |

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---------|----------|---------|--------|----------|---------|---------|---------|-----|---------|---------|---------|
| Ask/answer questions about information presented orally | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | 9%(2) | 91%(22) | n/a | 31%(8) | 69%(17) | n/a |
| Describe familiar people, places, things, and events | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | 17%(4) | 83%(20) | n/a | 16%(4) | 85%(21) | n/a |
| Print many upper- and lower-case letters | n/a | n/a | 100(24) | 8%(2) | 92%(22) | n/a | 4%(1) | 96%(23) | n/a | 15%(4) | 4%(1) | 81%(20) |
| Use frequently occurring nouns/verbs; form plurals | 36%(9) | 64%(15) | n/a | 12%(3) | 88%(21) | n/a | 96%(23) | 4%(1) | n/a | 69%(17) | 31%(8) | n/a |
| Understand and use question words | 8%(2) | 92%(22) | n/a | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | 4%(1) | 96%(23) | n/a | 20%(5) | 80%(20) | n/a |
| Use the more frequently occurring prepositions | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | 20%(5) | 80%(19) | n/a | 64%(15) | 36%(9) | n/a | 27%(7) | 83%(18) | n/a |
| Produce and expand complete sentences | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | 8%(2) | 92%(22) | n/a | 74%(18) | 26%(6) | n/a | 16%(4) | 85%(21) | n/a |
| Capitalize words and name end punctuation | 24%(6) | 76%(18) | n/a | 35%(8) | 65%(16) | n/a | 61%(15) | 39%(9) | n/a | 15%(4) | 85%(21) | n/a |
| Spell phonetically; letters for consonant/vowel sounds | 42%(10) | 54%(13) | 4%(1) | 23%(6) | 15%(4) | 62%(14) | 96%(23) | 4%(1) | n/a | 15%(4) | 60%(15) | 15%(6) |

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---------|----------|-----|---------|----------|-----|----------|---------|-----|--------|----------|-----|
| Identify new meanings for familiar words; use acquired words and phrases | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | 77%(18) | 23%(6) | n/a | 57%(14) | 43%(10) | n/a | 15%(4) | 85%(21) | n/a |
| Use inflections and affixes as a clue to meaning of a word | 24%(6) | 76%(18) | n/a | 77%(18) | 23%(6) | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | n/a | 15%(4) | 85%(21) | n/a |
| Sort common objects into categories | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | 4%(1) | 96%(23) | n/a | n/a | 100%(25) | n/a |
| Relate verbs and adjectives to their opposites; distinguish verb meanings | 48%(12) | 52%(13) | n/a | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | 26%(6) | 74%(18) | n/a | 8%(2) | 92%(23) | n/a |

Note. * = sample *n*, /a = 0%

(table continues)

| Skill/Element Description | Teacher I | | | Teacher J | | | Teacher K | | | Total <i>n</i> 's | | |
|---|-------------|----------|-------------|-------------|----------|-------------|-------------|----------|-------------|-------------------|----------|-------------|
| | Below Grade | On Grade | Above Grade | Below Grade | On Grade | Above Grade | Below Grade | On Grade | Above Grade | Below Grade | On Grade | Above Grade |
| Answer questions about a text, retell familiar stories | 13%(3) | 63%(16) | 25%(7) | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | 13%(3) | 75%(19) | 13%(3) | 51 | 158 | 64 |
| Ask and answer questions about words in a text | 13%(3) | 88%(23) | n/a | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | 13%(3) | 88%(22) | n/a | 61 | 206 | n/a |
| Recognize common types of texts | n/a | 100%(26) | n/a | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | n/a | 100%(25) | n/a | 48 | 223 | n/a |
| Describe the role of the author and illustrations in a text | n/a | 100%(26) | n/a | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | n/a | 100%(25) | n/a | 30 | 241 | n/a |
| Compare and contrast experience of characters in stories | 12%(3) | 88%(23) | n/a | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | 25%(6) | 75%(19) | n/a | 73 | 196 | n/a |
| Actively engage in group reading activities | n/a | 100%(26) | n/a | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | 8%(2) | 92%(23) | n/a | 26 | 245 | n/a |
| Answers questions about and describe informational texts | 8%(2) | 92%(24) | n/a | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | n/a | 100%(25) | n/a | 59 | 212 | n/a |
| Identify front cover, back cover, and title page | n/a | 100%(26) | n/a | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | n/a | 100%(25) | n/a | 13 | 257 | n/a |
| Identify the reasons an author gives to support points | 17%(4) | 83%(22) | n/a | 9%(2) | 91%(22) | n/a | 17%(4) | 83%(21) | n/a | 95 | 196 | n/a |

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|---|--------|----------|--------|-------|----------|-----|--------|----------|--------|----|-----|-----|
| Identify similarities and differences in two texts | 12%(3) | 88%(23) | n/a | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | 21%(5) | 79%(20) | n/a | 61 | 210 | n/a |
| Follows left-right, top-bottom, page-by-page | n/a | 100%(26) | n/a | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | 8%(2) | 92%(23) | n/a | 12 | 259 | n/a |
| Spoken words are represented by sequence of letters | n/a | 100%(26) | n/a | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | n/a | 100%(25) | n/a | 13 | 259 | n/a |
| Recognize and name upper- and lower-case letters | 4%(1) | 96%(25) | n/a | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | 8%(2) | 92%(23) | n/a | 25 | 247 | n/a |
| Recognize and produce rhyming words | 13%(3) | 88%(23) | n/a | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | 21%(5) | 79%(20) | n/a | 66 | 201 | n/a |
| Count, pronounce, blend, and segment syllables | 17%(4) | 83%(22) | n/a | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | 17%(4) | 83%(21) | n/a | 63 | 206 | n/a |
| Blend and segment onsets and rimes | 13%(3) | 88%(23) | n/a | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | 21%(5) | 79%(20) | n/a | 69 | 202 | n/a |
| Pronounce initial, medial vowel, and final sounds | 4%(1) | 96%(25) | n/a | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | 13%(3) | 88%(22) | n/a | 68 | 200 | n/a |
| Add/substitute individual sounds to make new words | 8%(2) | 92%(24) | n/a | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | 29%(7) | 71%(18) | n/a | 84 | 177 | n/a |
| Produce sounds for consonants and vowels | n/a | 79%(21) | 21%(5) | 9%(2) | 91%(22) | n/a | 17%(4) | 71%(18) | 13%(3) | 69 | 153 | 49 |

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|--------|----------|-----|--------|----------|-----|---------|----------|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Read common high-frequency words by sight | 17%(4) | 83%(22) | n/a | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | 21%(5) | 79%(20) | n/a | 81 | 190 | n/a |
| Distinguish between similarly spelled words | 17%(4) | 83%(22) | n/a | 9%(2) | 91%(22) | n/a | 42%(11) | 58%(14) | n/a | 110 | 160 | n/a |
| Read emergent-reader texts with understanding | n/a | 100%(26) | n/a | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | 13%(3) | 88%(22) | n/a | 56 | 215 | n/a |
| Draw, dictate and write to compose opinion pieces | n/a | 100%(26) | n/a | 13%(3) | 87%(21) | n/a | n/a | 100%(25) | n/a | 88 | 183 | n/a |
| Draw, dictate, and write to compose informative texts | n/a | 100%(26) | n/a | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | n/a | 100%(25) | n/a | 61 | 210 | n/a |
| Draw, dictate, and write to narrate an event | n/a | 100%(26) | n/a | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | n/a | 100%(25) | n/a | 55 | 216 | n/a |
| Respond to suggestions from peers to improve writing | 13%(3) | 88%(23) | n/a | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | n/a | 100%(25) | n/a | 102 | 169 | n/a |
| Explores digital tools to produce and publish writing | n/a | 100%(26) | n/a | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | n/a | 100%(25) | n/a | 24 | 247 | n/a |
| Participate in shared research and writing projects | 13%(3) | 88%(23) | n/a | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | 8%(2) | 92%(23) | n/a | 43 | 228 | n/a |
| Participate in collaborative conversations | 13%(3) | 88%(23) | n/a | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | 17%(4) | 83%(21) | n/a | 62 | 209 | n/a |

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|--------|---------|--------|-------|----------|----------|---------|----------|--------|-----|-----|-----|
| Ask/answer questions about information presented orally | 13%(3) | 88%(23) | n/a | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | 13%(3) | 88%(22) | n/a | 33 | 238 | n/a |
| Describe familiar people, places, things, and events | 13%(3) | 88%(23) | n/a | 9%(2) | 91%(22) | n/a | n/a | 100%(25) | n/a | 33 | 238 | n/a |
| Print many upper- and lower-case letters | n/a | 75%(20) | 25%(6) | n/a | n/a | 100%(24) | 21%(5) | 79%(20) | n/a | 15% | 103 | 125 |
| Use frequently occurring nouns/verbs; form plurals | 13%(3) | 88%(23) | n/a | 9%(2) | 91%(22) | n/a | 29%(7) | 71%(18) | n/a | 69% | 192 | n/a |
| Understand and use question words | 13%(3) | 88%(23) | n/a | 9%(2) | 91%(22) | n/a | 29%(7) | 71%(18) | n/a | 20% | 238 | n/a |
| Use the more frequently occurring prepositions | 17%(4) | 83%(22) | n/a | 9%(2) | 91%(22) | n/a | 29%(7) | 71%(18) | n/a | 27% | 201 | n/a |
| Produce and expand complete sentences | 17%(4) | 83%(22) | n/a | 9%(2) | 91%(22) | n/a | 21%(5) | 79%(20) | n/a | 16% | 207 | n/a |
| Capitalize words and name end punctuation | 17%(4) | 83%(22) | n/a | n/a | 100%(24) | n/a | 42%(11) | 58%(14) | n/a | 15% | 160 | n/a |
| Spell phonetically; letters for consonant/vowel sounds | 7%(17) | 17%(4) | 52%(5) | n/a | 17%(4) | 83%(21) | 17%(4) | 58%(15) | 25%(6) | 15% | 79 | 97 |

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|--------|----------|-----|--------|---------|-----|---------|----------|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Identify new meanings for familiar words; use acquired words and phrases | 21%(5) | 79%(21) | n/a | 22%(6) | 78%(19) | n/a | 33%(8) | 67%(17) | n/a | 15% | 157 | n/a |
| Use inflections and affixes as a clue to meaning of a word | 33%(9) | 67%(17) | n/a | 26%(7) | 74%(18) | n/a | 33%(8) | 67%(17) | n/a | 127 | 145 | n/a |
| Sort common objects into categories | n/a | 100%(26) | n/a | 9%(2) | 91%(23) | n/a | n/a | 100%(25) | n/a | | 263 | n/a |
| Relate verbs and adjectives to their opposites; distinguish verb meanings | 17%(4) | 83%(22) | n/a | 26%(7) | 74%(18) | n/a | 38%(10) | 63%(15) | n/a | 8% | 189 | n/a |

Note. * = sample *n*, n/a = 0%

Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the implementation of literacy centers intended to improve reading skills of kindergarten students in a public elementary school. Specifically, I investigated the extent to which implementation of literacy centers was consistent with the principles of mastery learning based on differentiation by ability.

One major finding is that teachers utilized both objective and subjective assessments to assign students to initial learning tasks and to monitor student progress throughout the school year. Objective assessments included the Fountas and Pinnell benchmark assessment system to determine reading levels and both GKIDS and checklists to evaluate skill mastery. Subjective assessments were based on observations of students working independently and within reading groups. Teacher judgment based on observation was sometimes used to determine assignment to learning tasks and placement into groups. Teachers on the whole viewed subjective assessment, in conjunction with objective assessment, as an acceptable means of determining student progress and skill mastery.

The use of objective tests is consistent with principles of mastery learning. To develop mastery learning in students, one must be able to recognize when students have achieved it. According to Bloom (1968), objectivity is seen through the operating procedures of defining what is meant by mastery and collecting the necessary evidence to establish whether or not a student has achieved it. Objective tests are the tools used to determine what the student has mastered, and what, if anything, is needed for the student to achieve mastery (Bloom, 1968). Further, Bloom (1968), acknowledges that the “appropriate use of these tests helps to ensure that each set of learning tasks is thoroughly

mastered before subsequent learning tasks are started” (p. 9). Through objective assessments, it is determined where the specific points of difficulty lie and what correction is needed to promote mastery (Bloom, 1968). Correctives are then used to promote student mastery through additional time to learn and alternate activities (Guskey, 2007). Since correctives are based on formative assessments, they are objective in nature, providing explicit data to be used to remedy the identified areas of learning deficits (Guskey, 2010).

On the other hand, use of subjective assessment is not consistent with principles of mastery learning. According to Bloom (1978), although teachers strive to provide equal learning opportunities for all students, observations have shown that positive reinforcement, encouragement, and interactions are given more frequently to the top third or fourth of the class and not others. With the cycle of group instruction, testing, and correctives through mastery learning, teachers need to ensure equal learning opportunities are available and assessments clearly indicate “what each students has learned and what he or she still needs to learn before the learning task has been mastered” (Bloom, 1978, p. 570). Grading for mastery occurs through the predetermined mastery performance standard, promoting fairness (Block, 1980). Subjective assessment through teacher judgment is not favorable because research has shown that we do more to develop learning in our best students and we tend to believe that some students have the ability to learn while others do not (Bloom, 1978). While quick teacher judgment calls can be made in relation to what learning behaviors students are demonstrating, there may be little consistency from student to student on what is expected as mastery and corrective feedback information is not available for students. Teacher judgment also does not have

a set criteria for what is considered mastery of a skill. Based on mastery learning, “Both the teacher and the learner must have some understanding of what the achievement criteria are and both must be able to secure evidence of progress toward these criteria” (Bloom, 1968, p. 8). Developing mastery learning in students suggests achievement standards and students need to feel they are being judged on their level of performance (Bloom, 1968).

A second major finding is that although students were given opportunities to engage in both independent and collaborative tasks, 90% of the time during the first observation was devoted to collaborative work and only 10% to independent work. While some students seemed to prefer working independently, and proceeded as such, much more time was spent on collaboration. As no redirection was given by teachers, it may be assumed that the high proportion of collaborative work was viewed by teachers as an acceptable practice. Peer support was observed in many collaborative activities, with the highest level of peer support evident during paired reading groups and literacy games, and less peer support during word work. However, during the second observation, the balance between collaborative and independent work was equal. There was a pronounced reduction in the amount of time in collaborative work on literacy tasks outside of paired reading and games during the second observation. One possible interpretation of these results is that by the second observation, many students may have reached higher skill levels, thus enabling them to be more independent learners.

Bloom (1968) views collaborative learning as an important component of mastery learning as students work in small groups exposing their areas of weaknesses and obtaining corrective assistance from each other. In addition, he believes the group

process allows the more able students to have opportunities to strengthen their learning “in the process of helping another person grasp the idea through alternative ways of explaining and using the idea” (Bloom, 1968, p. 5). Therefore, the use of independent and collaborative learning opportunities, with an emphasis on peer support, is consistent with principles of mastery learning. According to Bloom (1978), students in mastery learning classes become more cooperative in helping each other and become adept at seeking help from friends when experiencing difficulty in a task. Independent tasks are often part of an enrichment or extension activity, providing “valuable, challenging, and rewarding learning experiences for learners who have mastered the material” (Guskey, 2010, p. 56). The mastery learning model is typically a group-based approach, in which students for the most part learn in cooperation with classmates (Guskey & Gates, 1986).

A third major finding is that the overwhelming majority of learning tasks were focused on building literacy skills. An integration of phonics, phonemic awareness, comprehension, fluency, and vocabulary was seen within and across literacy centers, suggesting that students were receiving a balanced opportunity to improve in all skill areas. Students were engaged in skill-building tasks through sight word, rhyming, and alphabet games, writing, responding to text, reading, and building sight words, as well as literacy development activities such as listening comprehension and text discussion. The results of my study indicate that in 95% of the observation times/periods, teachers were focused on building skills and 5% on listening comprehension/text discussion. During the second observation, the focus on skills-building continued, but with less emphasis on word recognition and more emphasis on writing.

Utilizing a variety of learning tasks to build specific skills is also consistent with principles of mastery learning. Bloom (1978) believes that most learners can achieve high levels of learning if provided with the time needed to master skills. Mastery learning stipulates that instructional activities are planned to give students opportunities to practice and actively engage in the learning of skills (Guskey, 2007). Students in mastery learning classes are provided opportunities to explore alternative ways of learning unmastered skills (Block, 1980), as teachers expand learning tasks, accommodating different learning styles and modalities (Guskey, 2010). In the classrooms observed, students were given multiple opportunities throughout the week to develop new skills and practice old skills through hands-on, visual, and auditory based learning tasks. On the other hand, less time was devoted to extending literacy learning through enrichment opportunities.

The fourth major finding is that despite the high level of differentiated instruction, not all students were able to complete assigned tasks. Differentiated instruction included (a) assigning leveled readers, (b) varying writing from letters, words, sentences, or stories, (c) varying number of sentences written, (d) selecting non-mastered sight words for students based on assessment results, (e) varying skills-based games, (f) providing technology support, (g) and assigning tasks to reinforce skills already introduced. Unfortunately, although observations confirmed students working on differentiated tasks or with differentiated materials, it was noted that a high number of students, particularly low achievers, were off task in many classrooms. Observations showed that some students still struggled with completing tasks, even though the tasks were supposedly at their ability level, and they needed support from a classmate, teacher, or paraprofessional.

One possible interpretation of this observation is that activities for lower-achieving students may have been too difficult, raising the question of how student ability was determined or how task difficulty was aligned with ability level.

Differentiated instruction is consistent with principles of mastery learning. In mastery learning classrooms, teachers differentiate tasks in order to meet students' individual learning needs (Bloom, 1978). As specific students work on skills that have not been mastered, others are given enrichment or extension activities to "broaden their learning experiences" (Guskey, 2007, p. 13). Indeed, differentiated instruction based on ongoing evaluation of student ability may be the centerpiece of mastery learning. Because document data indicate that a percentage of students do not achieve mastery at the completion of the school year, it may be possible that for some students at least, differentiated instruction was assigned consistently but not successfully.

In summary, many principles of mastery learning were evident in observed classrooms. Mastery learning techniques included use of objective assessments to determine placement and achievement; a strong emphasis on peer collaboration; variety in learning tasks to build and reinforce skills; and attempted implementation of instruction differentiated by ability. However, two approaches used by teachers were not aligned with mastery learning. First, teachers frequently depended upon subjective assessments to assign students to tasks and groups. In addition, teachers often assigned low-achieving students tasks above their current skill level, evidenced by off-task behavior and inability to complete assignments.

I sought to determine if implementation of literacy centers could help explain low reading scores at the project site. Overall, it appeared that implementation of literacy

centers contributed to the literacy development of average and high achievers. On the other hand, low achievers appeared to struggle throughout the study. Low achievers were often off-task, and when assignments were attempted, work was often inaccurate or incorrect without direct support from a teacher or higher-achieving classmate. Further, attempts among low achievers to collaborate frequently led to unsuccessful results. These findings lead to a plausible conclusion that although elements of mastery learning were evident with all learners, instructional supports aligned with mastery learning may have been misapplied with low achievers. It is possible that reliance on subjective judgment may have led teachers to assume low achievers were more advanced than they actually were, resulting in the assignment of tasks that were above the student's ability level. It is also possible that the almost total emphasis on peer collaboration over independent work was insufficient to meet the academic needs of low achievers, who may have needed more time on individual skill development. Further, peer collaboration may have been less effective among low achievers due to their insufficient basic skills. Without basic skills, low achievers could not offer support to each other, hindering peer collaboration.

Section Two has explained the case study methodology and the results of the study. While teachers implemented literacy centers to advantage for high and average achievers, meeting the needs of low achievers was not as evident. As a result of these findings, the deliverable project that has been developed for this doctoral project study is an in-service professional development with a focus on using mastery learning techniques to differentiate instruction for low achievers, including specific research-based classroom activities to build and reinforce reading skills for low-achieving kindergarten students.

Section Three will describe the project and its appropriateness to address the research problem and provide a rationale for the use of the project genre.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

The deliverable project developed for this study is an in-service professional development opportunity for kindergarten teachers in the Gwinnett County School District. The professional development will consist of seven sessions conducted by myself for a total of approximately 9 hours. In the initial meeting, I will deliver a PowerPoint presentation, handouts relating to mastery learning techniques, and a manual with activities to meet the literacy needs of low-achieving students, which was determined in the project study to be an area of need. The first follow-up session will occur 6 weeks later for participants to share results from their implementation of mastery learning techniques and differentiated activities with low-achieving students. Additional follow-up sessions will occur monthly to discuss activities implemented and monitor low-achieving-student progress.

Description and Goals

The in-service professional development sessions will provide kindergarten teachers at the project site with information on how to overcome the weaknesses of literacy center implementation observed in the research study. These weaknesses include using subjective assessments to determine ability levels, as well as selecting literacy tasks that could not be completed successfully by low achievers. The in-service professional development sessions will follow a professional training model in which an expert presenter will attempt to affect knowledge, skills, or attitudes among trainees (Sparks & Loucks-Horsley, 1989). The training model will offer teachers the opportunity to gain knowledge relating to the identification of ability levels and selection of independent

literacy tasks for low-achieving students. Trainees will be allowed time to implement new learning in classrooms, and the trainer will observe implementation practices. Trainees will then reconvene to share and discuss experiences. Discussion has been cited as useful in the training model to provide feedback from expert to trainees based on observational experiences (Sparks & Loucks-Horsley, 1989). Discussion amongst trainees will also be used so that they may share what was learned.

The training sessions will address the problem of a high proportion of below-grade-level reading scores at the completion of kindergarten by sharing some of the misapplications of mastery learning that were observed at the project site. With an understanding of these techniques, teachers at the project site will be aware of how best to determine ability levels and choose subsequent activities that will build on and reinforce developing skills of low achievers. A correct match between ability level and activities is needed to build prerequisite skills, ensuring that a foundation is present for learning later skills and fostering successful literacy learning. As students begin to work on their ability levels and progress through a series of skills, it is believed that the number of below-grade reading scores at the completion of kindergarten will decrease.

The main goal of this project is to deliver training that will aid in the understanding of how best to choose independent literacy center activities for low-achieving students. Providing a needed resource with guidance on determining student ability levels and research-based literacy activities to assist kindergarten teachers in implementing successful, differentiated literacy centers is an important goal for this project.

Rationale

The project will align with the initial problem identified in Section 1 (low reading scores in kindergarten) and the results of the study presented in Section 2 (weaknesses in implementation of mastery learning). Both formal test data and results of the present study indicate unsatisfactory growth among low achievers. Thus, the professional training will be intended to assist kindergarten teachers with more effectively differentiating literacy activities in a literacy center setting among low-achieving readers. The professional development will take place across two sessions. In Session 1, I will present (a) study findings, (b) principles of mastery learning theory, (c) mastery learning techniques in determining ability levels, and (d) activities for low-achieving kindergarten students. Session 2 will take place 6 weeks later after participants have had an opportunity to try out the new skills or teaching activities presented in Session 1. Subsequent sessions will occur monthly for discussion of implementation practices and monitoring of student progress. According to Mizell (2010), educators benefit most from learning in a professional development setting where they can immediately apply what they learn.

Sparks and Loucks-Horsley (1989) identified five models of professional development for teachers. Of these, the project will most closely follow a *training* model in order to change or enhance teacher knowledge in relation to meeting the needs of low-achieving students in literacy centers. Following the training model, an expert trainer will share research-based best practices and encourage teachers to apply these practices in their own classrooms. Training is considered appropriate when learning outcomes have

already been determined and the goal is to alter teacher knowledge or skills (Sparks & Loucks-Horsley, 1989).

The other four models of staff development do not appear as appropriate for this project. *Individually-guided* staff development (Sparks & Loucks-Horsley, 1989) would not be feasible because teachers do not need to identify a learning need. A learning need has already been determined through the research study, and appropriate activities have been preselected to address it. *Observation/assessment* (Sparks & Loucks-Horsley, 1989) is inappropriate because there was no transfer of knowledge prior to observing teacher practices, nor was there any preconference prior to classroom observation. However, after the transfer of knowledge, an observation will occur to examine the implementation of research-based practices. A *development/improvement* process (Sparks & Loucks-Horsley, 1989) was not selected because teachers are not being asked to develop or adapt curriculum, design a program, or engage in systematic school improvement processes. Rather, teachers are being asked to apply new knowledge in the classroom setting to improve the performance of low-achieving students. Last, *inquiry* (Sparks & Loucks-Horsley, 1989) was also deemed inappropriate, as teachers are not being asked to formulate questions about their practices or to pursue objective answers to these questions. In fact, the research study has reported on teachers' current practices and has identified areas of potential misalignment with principles of mastery learning.

According to the data collected from the research study, mastery learning techniques did not appear to be successfully applied to low achievers. One may surmise that teachers either lacked sufficient knowledge of mastery learning, had sufficient knowledge but chose not to implement mastery learning for all students, or had sufficient

knowledge but lacked the resources to fully implement mastery learning. Based on observations and interviews, I concluded that neither teacher attitudes nor resource deficits affected teacher behavior. Rather, participants in the study may not have had sufficient knowledge of mastery learning techniques to foster the literacy success of all learners. A particular focus of the training will be independent literacy center activities for low-achieving students. Although mastery learning does encourage collaborative learning, one of the key findings of the study was that low achievers in kindergarten were not benefitting from peer collaboration. The training model will therefore provide an opportunity to promote accurate identification of ability levels along with specific research-based independent learning activities to meet the literacy needs of low-achieving students.

Review of the Literature

The genre selected for this project study is in-service professional development to assist teachers with correctly identifying student needs and providing instructional supports within the context of a kindergarten literacy center. It is unknown whether teachers were previously exposed to this knowledge or whether this information will be new to them. In either case, the in-service professional development will provide knowledge that should allow teachers to modify classroom practices observed in the research study. In-service professional development may be viewed as a learning environment for teachers, who are required daily to apply knowledge of instructional techniques. It has been suggested that reflection, discussion, and planning with colleagues are useful in promoting professional growth and improving student achievement (Gibson & Brooks, 2012). The in-service professional development will

allow the opportunity to reflect on current practices, discussion of how to improve those practices, and planning for implementing new practices within literacy centers. Time will also be provided to reflect upon and discuss new practices after implementation.

Professional development also allows teachers to keep abreast of current developments and initiatives in education (Gardner, 1996; Monahan, 1993; Torff & Sessions, 2009).

This literature review focuses on both attributes of and barriers to effective professional development. I reviewed research articles obtained through peer-reviewed journals, university library resources, and electronic databases, primarily ERIC, Education Research Complete, and SAGE. Search terms included *professional development*, *effective professional development*, *barriers to professional development*, and *in-service professional development*. This literature review includes literature published between 1996 and 2013. The review begins with a focus on attributes of effective professional development, including establishing a shared vision; receiving support through strong leadership; promoting a climate of trust; focusing on individual relevance; providing opportunities for collaborative relationships; allowing time to act and reflect on new knowledge; and offering extended professional development opportunities. The review next focuses on barriers to effective professional development, with attention to (a) passivity of participants, (b) group size, (c) time constraints, (d) one-size-fits-all approaches, (e) resistance toward change, (f) limited resources, (g) and inadequate leadership.

Attributes of Effective Professional Development

Shared vision. Several authors suggested that shared vision is a component of successful professional development (Cwikla, 2002; Gardner, 1996; Guskey, 2002;

Yamagata-Lynch & Haudenschild, 2006). Shared vision occurs when organizational goals are based upon common interests and a sense of shared purpose among members of the organization and are not imposed by one or a few people (Lee, 2010). For example, Guskey (2002) contended that shared vision promotes professional development that is well organized, clearly focused, and purposefully directed. Gardner (1996) argued that shared vision fosters a sense of ownership among participants and that such ownership can be spawned by the facilitator. Yamagata-Lynch and Haudenschild (2006) cited pride among participants as a benefit of shared vision. Further, lack of shared vision may produce detachment and poor motivation among participants (Cwikla, 2002).

Needs assessment, collaboration, and emphasis on classroom application have all been cited as contributing to shared vision (Bouwma-Gearhart, 2012; Gibson & Brooks, 2012; Lee, 2010; Newman, King & Youngs, 2001; Yamagata-Lynch & Haudenschild, 2006). For example, a study in China found that teachers felt that professional development was ineffective in improving teacher knowledge or classroom practice because teacher needs had not been assessed (Guo, Waikato, & Yong, 2013).

Strong leadership. Strong administrative leadership may also play an important role in professional development initiatives. The literature suggests that strong leadership from building administrators improves the quality of professional development, leading to an increase in student achievement (Bouwma-Gearhart, 2012; Guskey, 2002; Newmann et al., 2000). According to Guskey (2002), effective school leaders plan professional development after examining student needs, factoring in time constraints, collaboration, and delivery methods. Bouwma-Gearhart (2012) also acknowledged that effective leadership is seen as making long-lasting commitments of resources and other

supports to promote teaching and learning reform. Gibson and Brooks (2012) found that administrators who encouraged teachers to attend workshops, provided appropriate funding, and became informed about or participated in workshops initiated success in new practices and initiatives. Additionally, a 2 year study of nine elementary schools by Newmann et al. (2000) found that principals committed to school development arranged professional development that adhered to the needs of teachers through grade-level and school-wide opportunities, promoting successful learning endeavors.

Climate of trust. Trust among participants may be another potential facilitator of effective professional development (Farmer, 2005; Yamagata-Lynch & Haudenschild, 2006). According to this view, participants should feel encouraged to contribute their ideas (Hesson, 2013; Hoy, Bradley & Horwitz, 2012). Bouwma-Gearhart (2012) found that a climate of trust can be established when participants have similar needs and desires to improve teaching practices, promoting active learning. Similarly, Gardner (1996) found that when a facilitator promoted a supportive, safe environment, participants were motivated, highly engaged, and committed to their learning.

However, establishing a climate of trust may be difficult, as teachers may not want to feel vulnerable, acknowledge they are not expert, or cause conflict with colleagues (Miretzky, 2007). For example, Cranston's (2009) study of professional learning communities found that participants were not comfortable in offering a professional critique of each other due to their close working relationships. Further, close working relationships actually impeded improvement practices due to teachers spending time protecting each other from professional critique instead of offering suggestions and support.

Individual relevance. When the content of professional development is easily adaptable to classroom use, teachers tend to value the learning opportunity more (Bouwma-Gerhart, 2012; Gardner, 1996; Smylie, 1986; Yamagata-Lynch & Haudenschild, 2006). Effective professional development focuses on classroom-based issues without an expectation that teachers will completely change their practice (Yamagata-Lynch & Haudenschild, 2006). When participants are able to self-select professional development, they find the opportunities relevant and challenging, enhancing their knowledge and skills (Miretzky, 2007).

Research evidence supports teachers' preferences for professional development that is based in an area of their own interest and provides classroom application practices relating to determined issues, with ready-to-use materials (Shriner, Schlee, Hamil & Libler, 2009; Supovitz & Turner, 2000; Yamagata-Lynch & Haudenschild, 2006). This desire for individually relevant professional development may be seen in Gardner's (2006) study, in which teachers articulated the desire for learning experiences that developed and enhanced knowledge and that could help them improve student achievement in their own classrooms.

In contrast, research evidence demonstrates that professional development can be effective with a focus on school-wide goals and programs. For example, elementary school principals in the highest ranking schools were found to implement broader based professional development rather than to leave choices up to individual teachers (Newmann, King, & Youngs, 2005). Vazquez-Bernal, Mellado, Jimenes-Perez, and Lenero (2011) also reported that professional development leading to innovation for the

school community as a whole was effective at addressing the curriculum and improving instruction.

Collaborative relationships. Some proponents argue that opportunities for teacher collaboration should be incorporated into professional development (Carpenter, Dublin & Harper, 2005; Gibson & Brooks, 2012; Guskey, 2002). Collaboration during professional development is shown to foster a sense of community and shared purpose among participants (Guskey, 2002). To be effective, professional development should require participants to communicate openly with one another about pedagogical issues (Carpenter et al., 2005; Yates, 2007). Teachers can also gain a great deal of knowledge relating to new practices from each other as they learn from more experienced peers (Gibson & Brooks, 2012).

Teachers view personal interactions as an effective means to attain professional growth (Hardy, 2010; Monahan, 1993). For example, Vazquez-Bernal et al. (2010) found that by sharing problems and solutions, teachers enhanced professional skills and gained affective and emotional support. Carpenter et al. (2005) also found by yielding control to the participants themselves, teachers felt a sense of validation and empowerment through the sharing of practices and creation of lessons. Boyle, While, and Boyle (2004) likewise found that greater impact on teaching practice occurred when teachers were engaged in collaborative interactions around topics identified by the group.

On the other hand, studies of online professional development challenge the generally accepted notion that collaboration makes professional development more effective. Studies by Carey, Kleiman, Russell, Venable, and Louie (2008); Russell, Kleiman, Carey, and Douglas (2009); and Russell, Carey, Klieman, and Venable (2009)

all found that when comparing face-to-face with online professional development, online self-paced opportunities with no interactions yielded positive effects on teacher beliefs, knowledge, and instructional practices that were similar to those yielded by face-to-face instructional formats.

Action and reflection. Research shows that professional development participants should be allowed to try out their new knowledge, reflect on their implementations, and reconvene for collaborative discussions (Bouwma-Gearhart, 2012; Gibson & Brooks, 2012; Shriner et al., 2009). In this view, reflection renews the focus of professional development and aligns the group's "efforts to achieve common goals" (Hesson, 2013, p. 26). Thus, giving participants the opportunity to reflect on and discuss their experiences supports them in constructing new knowledge and beliefs (Farmer, Hauk & Neumann, 2005; Vazquez-Bernal et al., 2011).

In a national study of best practices, participant knowledge and skills were increased through active linking to classroom practice, observing and being observed in the classroom, and follow-up discussion (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman & Yoon, 2001). Boyle et al. (2004) also suggest when teachers are given the opportunity to practice new strategies gained through professional development and reflect upon their teaching, a stronger impact on teaching practice is gained.

Extended professional development. Further, Farmer et al. (2005) proposed that multiple-session professional development provides more processing time and better engagement opportunities than single-day sessions. In addition, Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) argued that short workshop models of professional development yield little evidence of promoting student achievement gains. Instead, evidence indicates that

extended time span and contact hours often leads to enhancement in teachers knowledge and skills (Garet et al., 2001; Newmann et al. 2000). Boyle et al. (2004) found most participants involved in longer-term professional development changed at least one aspect of their teaching practice based on newly gained knowledge. Further, Boyle et al. (2004) study revealed that while short workshops foster teacher awareness or interest in developing knowledge and skills, the shorter time appears insufficient to promote learning that eventually affects classroom practice.

In contrast, other studies have shown that participation in short workshops has produced changes in attitudes, beliefs, or behaviors. In a study of a one-day workshop focusing on teaching social skills to behaviorally challenged students, Barton-Arwood, Morrow, Lane, and Jolivette (2005) reported an increase in teachers' perceived knowledge, actual knowledge, and confidence in using new techniques. Shriner et al. (2009) analysis concurred that one to two day professional development opportunities are effective at increasing teacher knowledge and skills. Further, Yamagata-Lynch and Haudenschild (2006) reported that participants indicated a preference for one-day workshops based in an area of their own interest.

Barriers to Effective Professional Development

Passive recipients. Other literature has focused on potential barriers to effective professional development. For example, professional development that allows participants to remain passive receivers of information has been criticized as ineffective. In such passive-reception sessions, participants are usually viewed as lacking skills or information and can improve by listening to an expert on the topic (Hardy, 2010; Richardson, 2003; Torff & Sessions, 2009). Nipper et al. (2011) found that inability to

interact with a facilitator and other participants brought a level of tension to teachers as they felt their ability to learn was hindered.

Group size. Somewhat related to passivity is the effect of group size. Studies have shown that small groups promote interpersonal interactions (Gibson & Brooks, 2012; Sturko & Gregson, 2009; Torff & Sessions, 2009). These interactions provide motivation to learn and to adapt new practices (Gibson & Brooks; Yates, 2007). In contrast, many professional development opportunities are delivered to the entire school faculty, in hopes of gaining new ideas and immediate improvements (Guskey, 2009). Large group professional development is often utilized due to financial constraints and lack of resources, resulting in activities that are often lacking in quality (Shriner et al., 2009). Studies support the observation that many school-wide professional development sessions are large group, resulting in fragmented trainings that do not fit the needs of all teachers (Bezzina, 2006; Holloway, 2006).

Time constraints. Time constraints are sometimes mentioned as barriers as well. Hardy (2010) suggests that teachers have little time for substantive learning opportunities within a crowded week. Indeed, teaching responsibilities can often hamper the capacities for engaging in meaningful professional development activities (Monahan, 1991; Yamagata-Lynch & Haudenschild, 2006). Thornburg and Mungai (2011) found that although teachers valued the need for school reform, they expressed high levels of concern with losing instructional time. One view is that due to time constraints, teachers not only seek quick fixes to classroom problems, but also are resentful of professional development that requires weekend or summer participation (Yamagata-Lynch & Haudenschild, 2006). Yet Gibson and Brook (2012) found teachers felt confused when

insufficient time was spent on professional development, resulting in minimal change to teaching practice. On the other hand, Penuel, Fishman, Yamaguchi, and Gallagher (2007) found participants more willing to support a new program if sufficient time was given to plan for classroom implementation.

Some studies indicate that the tension between time constraints and effective professional development may be addressed through collaborative peer coaching (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Goldman, Wesner & Karnchanomai, 2013). Peer coaching involves observing and collaborating between two participants. Reduction in time is observed as paired groupings collaborate. Evidence exists to support the observation that peer coaching is more powerful with regard to transfer of learning than any other type of professional development (Swafford, 1998). Peer coaching may improve knowledge sharing, data analysis, and creation of better classroom learning opportunities (Hamlin, Ellinger & Beattie, 2008; Jewett & MacPhee, 2012). The issue of time constraints in obtaining the tools necessary for differentiating lessons is also noted. Latz, Neumeister, Adams, and Pierce (2009) found peer coaching alleviated this issue as teacher knowledge about instructional practice and motivation to implement new practices was enhanced.

The negative effect of time constraints may be somewhat mitigated by establishing the needs of the learning community, as opposed to spending more time on activities seen as less relevant to the teachers (Birman, Desimore, Porter & Garet, 2000; Garet et al., 2001; Guskey, 1999). Guskey (2009) concluded that organization, structure, and purposeful direction can result in the best use of time available for professional development.

One size fits all. Another potential barrier cited in the literature is lack of personalization to the professional needs of participants. Some research indicates that professional development that follows a pre-packaged, one-size-fits-all formula is ineffective at increasing teacher knowledge and developing instructional practices (Gibson & Brooks, 2012; Holloway, 2006). Bouwma-Gearhart (2012) proposed that various types of professional development should be available to serve individual needs and ongoing growth. Other authors suggested that when professional development does not fit a participant's teaching style or classroom application, there is little influence on teacher behavior (Monahan, 1993; Yamagata-Lynch & Haudenschild, 2006). Teachers express frustration when professional development does not address classroom needs (Cwikla, 2002; Yamagata-Lynch & Haudenschild, 2006).

Resistance to change. Teachers often attend professional development due to school or district-related mandates and are therefore resistant to changing their attitudes or professional practices (Cwikla, 2002; Gibson & Brooks, 2012; Vazquez-Bernal et al., 2011). Attitudinal or behavioral change may be difficult when the underpinnings of an innovative teaching practice conflict with teacher beliefs (Gardner, 1996). When change does occur, it may be a slow process, with teachers requiring time to assimilate the changes into their classrooms (Akerson, Cullen & Hanson, 2010; Rogan, 2007; Yates, 2007).

Teachers may also be resistant to change due to the amount of constant change that is part of the teaching profession (Gibson & Brooks, 2012; Guskey, 2009). Continual change in curriculum and instruction may result in emotional tension as teachers are asked to adapt teaching behaviors and perceptions (Gibson & Brooks, 2012).

Further, there is opportunity for resistance and resentment when teachers perceive disconnect between programs presented during professional development and everyday practice (Cwikla, 2002; Yamagata-Lynch & Haudenschild, 2006). Additionally, teachers may refuse to alter any aspect of their practice if they feel the new program requires extensive adjustment (Yamagata-Lynch & Haudenschild, 2006). Resistance may also occur if teachers anticipate a lack of follow-up or support (Gibson & Brooks, 2012; Monahan, 1993; Sailors & Price, 2010).

However, teachers are receptive to change when the professional development accounts for personal and social development needs (Bell & Gilbert, 1994; Proweller & Mitchener, 2004). Such constructs as self-esteem, reflection, and collaboration have been cited as correlates of receptivity to change (Ratcliff & Miller, 2009; Vazquez-Bernal et al., 2011).

Limited resources. Teachers often note that one of the biggest struggles with professional development is lack of appropriate resources to support the new curriculum or strategies presented (Carpenter et al., 2005; Gibson & Brooks, 2012). Specifically, teachers express concerns over lack of ready-to-use materials or the time to develop new materials (Richards & Skolits, 2009; Shriner et al., 2009; Yamagata-Lynch & Haudenschild, 2006). Professional development that offers ready-made materials or time to create materials is seen as more profitable (Gibson & Brooks, 2012).

Inadequate leadership. Gardner (1996) argued that assistance and support for teacher change is often minimal. For instance, participants have voiced lack of support in disseminating information to their colleagues after professional development (Gardner, 1996). Studies show without strong administrative support, professional development

yields little to no impact (Gibson & Brooks, 2012; Miller, Goddard & Goddard, 2010; Richards & Skolits). In contrast, strong and consistent administrative support has yielded implementation of new programs and improved student achievement (Miretzky, 2007).

Implications for Current Project

The project selected is in-service professional development, focusing on the weaknesses of literacy center implementation observed in the research study. Based on the literature review, I will strive to incorporate elements identified as contributing to effective professional development. Strong leadership will be present as administration is willing to provide the time for teachers to participate in the professional development and a place for the professional development sessions to take place, and have also indicated an interest in participating in the sessions to gain more knowledge of the problem and ways to address it; a climate of trust will be present as participants are accustomed to working with and supporting each other; individual relevance will be evident as the professional development is directly related to the participants classroom needs and provides the opportunity to increase student achievement through an enhancement of knowledge; collaborative relationships will be utilized as participants communicate with and learn from each other throughout the sessions; action and reflection will be a main component of the professional development, as participants take their recently gained knowledge into the classroom and then reconvene for discussions relating to implementation practices; last, the professional development will be extended, providing the opportunity for increased enhancement in knowledge and skills.

Project Implementation

Potential Resources and Existing Supports

Resources used in the project will include knowledge resources, physical resources, and human resources. In order to identify teaching strategies to improve performance of low-achieving kindergarten students in alignment with principles of mastery learning, I have used the kindergarten literacy skills identified by the state of Georgia, as well as an Internet search that yielded results from the Florida Center for Reading Research (2007), Learning Point Associates (2004), Texas Education Agency, and numerous research articles obtained from Walden University's online library. In order to present the PowerPoint developed from the knowledge resources, I will use the Smart Board in the school's media center. Copies of handouts will be made on the school's copy machine. Human resources will include myself as project developer and presenter, the 11 teachers who will participate in the training, and the building administrators who will also participate in the training and make available the facilities. To date there has been genuine interest among teachers and administrators in the results of the study and an excitement to learn more about supporting the needs of low-achievers.

Supports provided at the project site will include the use of the media center for professional development delivery. Although many events occur in the media center, the building administration supports professional development and commonly gives it priority. Building administrators will provide time for professional development during the regular school day, so participants will not need to stay after school or attend on weekends. The teachers will be removed from the classrooms by having a substitute for

the first professional development session, while subsequent sessions will occur during planning time. In addition, in-service credits for certificate renewal has been approved by the principal for attending the professional development.

Potential Barriers

At present, teachers at the project site attend grade-specific professional development during grade-level planning time every Thursday and grade-generic professional development each Tuesday afternoon after school. Due to one-size-fits-all nature of the Tuesday afternoon sessions, the project could be viewed by teachers as just another workshop that does not apply to or yield resources for the specific kindergarten grade level. To overcome this misconception, there will be communication to the teachers prior to delivery that the project will be similar to grade-level planning, with sole focus on kindergarten-based needs.

Time constraints may be a potential barrier, as teachers become responsible for meeting professional development expectations while managing the time needed to meet their daily work responsibilities and needs of their students (Guskey, 2009; Monahan, 1991; Yamagata-Lynch & Haudenschild, 2006). With the high demands on student achievement, teachers are wary of losing instructional time (Thornburg & Mungai, 2011). To overcome this barrier, the project developer will advertise that knowledge and activities can be used immediately in the participants' classrooms toward the goal of improving student achievement.

Resistance toward change may be another barrier, as teachers at the project site may have experienced prior curricular mandates with varying levels of eagerness. Research shows that resistance occurs particularly when little follow-up or support is

present after new practices are asked to be implemented (Gibson & Brooks, 2012; Monahan, 1993; Sailors & Price, 2010). Overcoming resistance toward change will be an ongoing effort by the presenter during the follow-up sessions in which participants will have the opportunity to share their thoughts on the strengths and weaknesses of the new practices. Research indicates that such collaboration may promote receptivity to change (Ratcliff & Miller, 2009; Varquez-Bernal et al., 2011).

Use of the media center on specific dates and times may be an additional barrier. First, the media center is also used by outside community groups. In addition, although building administrators support and give priority to professional development, other professional development may already be scheduled for the media center. To overcome this potential barrier, I will study the schedule and request to the media center specialist and principal a date based on availability. Follow-up sessions will be held in the grade-chair's room, so permission for these monthly meetings will have to be secured as well.

Proposal for Implementation and Timetable

Based on availability of the meeting room, the initial professional development session will take place one morning during the week of October 12, 2015, with the first follow-up session after five weeks, during the week of November 16, 2015 (see Table 10). Further follow-up sessions will occur monthly. It is assumed that a morning meeting of four hours would be sufficient to deliver the professional development. Nine weeks into the school year has been selected for the initial meeting to allow teachers the opportunity to determine the low-achieving group of students. In addition, teachers do not typically implement literacy centers within the classroom until six weeks into the school year, allowing time for students to become acclimated to a structured school

environment and working independently of the teacher. An initial follow-up session of one hour will be held for participants to share results from the implementation of best practices and activities delivered during the professional development. Additional 45-minute sessions will occur monthly during Thursday grade-level meetings. These additional meetings will continue throughout the school year and be used to discuss the implementation of activities and monitor low-achieving student progress. The last session will be one hour, as student data will be analyzed and discussed from the beginning to the end of the year.

Table 13

Timetable for Professional Development Sessions 2015-2016

| Date | Duration of Session | Purpose |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|
| Week of October 12 | 4 hours | Initial Training Session |
| Week of November 16 | 1 hour | First Follow-Up Session |
| Week of January 11 | 45 minutes | Monthly Follow-Up Session |
| Week of February 8 | 45 minutes | Monthly Follow-Up Session |
| Week of March 7 | 45 minutes | Monthly Follow-Up Session |
| Week of April 11 | 45 minutes | Monthly Follow-Up Session |
| Week of May 9 | 1 hour | Final Follow-Up Session |

Roles and Responsibilities

I will assume the role of project developer. In this capacity I will create a PowerPoint presentation as part of the initial training session, prepare handouts, gather all materials required for the training, and create a manual of research-based literacy activities. In addition, I will also facilitate all professional development sessions. Facilitation will include scheduling the media center, alerting the participants of upcoming sessions, leading the initial and follow-up sessions, and monitoring the time flow. In addition, I will provide opportunities for teacher collaboration in planning how to apply the knowledge conveyed during training, such as trying out materials and creating new activities.

The 11 kindergarten teachers will be participants in the professional development sessions and will be expected to apply the knowledge from the training toward their classroom practice. For example, during the initial training session, teachers will engage in discussions of how they are currently evaluating progress of low-achieving students and how they are determining appropriate classroom assignments. After the initial training session, teachers will begin implementing the new activities with their low-achieving students. They will monitor and track student progress through checklists and observations of work completed. In the six-week follow-up session, participants will be asked to share if and how their selection of activities changed, based on the activities that were presented at the first session. Teachers will present and discuss data used for tracking student progress. During the monthly follow-up sessions, teachers will continue to share implementation of new activities and tracking of student progress.

Project Evaluation

The evaluation of this project will include both formative (Appendix H) and summative evaluations (Appendix I). Formative evaluation can provide information to indicate if on-going learning is consistent with program goals and if changes to the learning experience may be needed to achieve desired outcomes (Haslam, 2010). Summative evaluation can provide information to indicate the overall effectiveness of the professional development at the conclusion of the sessions (Haslam, 2010). The stated goal of the project is to provide kindergarten teachers at the project site with information that can be transferred into classroom practice, with a focus on how to overcome the weaknesses of literacy center implementation observed in the research study. The formative and summative evaluations will place emphasis on changes in teacher practices as a result of participating in the professional development. Changes in practice is the appropriate measure of effectiveness, as the professional development sessions are intended to enhance use of literacy centers to improve literacy achievement of low-achieving kindergarten students. Changes in teacher knowledge or teacher attitudes, without application to classroom practice, would likely have minimal or no effect on increasing literacy skills of low achievers.

Evaluation, completed after teachers have had time to implement ideas gleaned from professional development, is helpful in assessing changes in instructional practices and student achievement (Gaytan & McEwen, 2010). Formative and summative evaluations will occur through questionnaires. Questionnaires can be useful instruments in allowing participants to answer open-ended questions in their own words, gathering information on changes in behavior and a review of materials and activities used by

teachers (Kutner, Sherman, Tibbetts, & Condelli, 1997). The formative questionnaire will be completed by participants and brought to each follow-up sessions to provide feedback on the effectiveness of the activities in meeting the literacy needs of low-achieving students and in determining the assessment tools used to align activities with student needs. The summative questionnaire will be completed by participants and brought to the last session. The focus will be on determining what activities were most useful in each area of reading and a summary of objective assessments used and their effectiveness in choosing activities. In addition to participants completing questionnaires, the trainer will observe individual classrooms to evaluate teacher behavior regarding selection and implementation of new literacy center activities (Appendix J). The overall evaluation goals are to determine if assessment and instructional practices have changed and the impact of student achievement. The key stakeholders are the teachers that are asked to change their assessment and instructional practices, as well as the administration that will be utilized as support and advocates for change.

Implications Including Social Change

Local Community

The most important beneficiaries of the proposed professional development project will be the low-achieving kindergarten students at the project site, who at the current time do not appear to be receiving benefit of the literacy centers. To the extent that the project affects teacher practice, the project has the potential to help low-achieving students be successful learners (Armbruster et al., 2001; Foster & Miller, 2007; NRA, 2000). As students in the early years become more and more successful learners, an

increase in motivation may occur and carry through the school years (Armbruster et al. 2001; Lepola et al., 2000). Students may view themselves as successful as they experience a decrease in academic challenges. Early reading achievement in kindergarten builds the foundational skills to be successful throughout school and into the workplace (Cain & Oakhill, 2013; Juel, 1988; McNamara et al., 2011; Snider, 1997). Improved literacy achievement could lead to less school drop-outs, an increase in productivity in the workplace, and better contributors to the local economy (Kellet, 2009).

Secondary beneficiaries of the proposed professional development project will be the 11 kindergarten teachers at the project site. Professional development has the potential to support employees by providing a means to keep abreast of changes and enhancing knowledge bases (Gardner, 1996; Monahan, 1993; Torff & Sessions, 2009). Such support in turns leads to a more productive and effective workplace (Lee, 2010).). As professional development stimulates learning, teachers may desire to pursue additional learning opportunities, upgrading their qualifications, knowledge, and skills (Gardner, 1996; Yamagata-Lynch & Haudenschild, 2006; Yates, 2007). Professional development can also increase teacher efficacy, leading to more confident teachers (Shriner et al., 2009; Yates, 2007). In addition, professional development can lead to promotions and salary increases as teachers earn credits toward their teacher license renewal and certificate upgrades (Yamagata-Lynch & Haudenschild, 2006).

Families and community partners will see the overall gains through public data, hopefully improving support for the school through more volunteers as many will want to be a part of the great things happening at the project site. Parents can feel good about the school their children attend, knowing that all students are receiving a quality education.

It is also hoped that parents will be more readily to meet, discuss, and contribute to the achievement of children that are struggling, lending assistance in the classroom and at home. Community partners, such as businesses and churches can provide mentors to students that are struggling socially and academically, providing assistance that leads to increases in self-esteem and academic achievement. The community partners can also provide resources, ranging from paper and glue to laptops, to improve the learning environment.

Broader Community

Although the expressed goal of the project is to improve student achievement at the project site, the project has the potential to affect social change at the county and state levels by sharing research-based evidence to improve student achievement. It is possible that the same deviations from mastery learning observed in the literacy centers at the project site may be occurring at other schools as well. Specific deliverables from the project, such as the PowerPoint presentation and the teaching manual, could be shared with other schools or school districts that have not fully met the needs of low-achieving kindergarten students. As funding for professional development is often limited, sharing information on what has been successful is practical and useful (Gibson & Brooks, 2012).

Conclusion

Section Three has included a description of the in-service professional development project and the alignment between the project and the problem identified in the doctoral study. It has also included a literature review identifying effective and ineffective attributes of professional development. Finally, it has included details regarding project implementation, project evaluation, and implications for social change.

Section Four will address the reflections and my personal conclusions relating to the project.

Section 4: Reflections/Conclusions

Introduction

My journey through the doctoral study project has been a challenging yet rewarding one. Section 4 serves as a reflection of the journey, describing the project strengths and weaknesses; suggesting alternative solutions to the project; providing an analysis of learning and self-reflection as a scholar, practitioner, and project developer; and offering suggestions for future research.

Project Strengths

A potential strength of the project is its utility in assisting teachers in developing classroom practices to objectively assess the literacy achievement of all kindergarten students, including low achievers, and to develop appropriate assessment-based learning activities consistent with principles of mastery learning. Objective assessments can ensure that students are accurately placed with literacy activities to meet their needs (Bloom, 1968; Guskey, 2010). To the extent that the project can modify teacher behavior in implementing mastery learning for all students, it will be a success.

Not only does the project provide practical classroom applications, it also allows teachers time to implement the suggested activities and then discuss with each other their experiences. Thus, a second strength of the project is the opportunity for teachers to collaboratively provide feedback to each other over a period of several weeks. Having teachers implement suggested activities and then reconvene to collaborate on the activities that worked best has potential to maximize the time students are engaged in beneficial learning opportunities (Bouwma-Gearhart, 2012; Gibson & Brooks, 2012; Shriner et al., 2009).

A third project strength is the manual containing research-based literacy activities, which can become a resource for not only the kindergarten teachers at the project site, but also kindergarten teachers at other sites and perhaps first-grade teachers as well. Although the training sessions will be limited in duration, the manual will be an ongoing reference addressing phonics, phonemic awareness, comprehension, fluency, and vocabulary, eliminating the need for teachers to search multiple references to plan effective research-based literacy instruction.

Project Limitations

A potential limitation of the project is the limited duration of the follow-up period during which teachers will reconvene to discuss the suggested assessment and learning strategies. Unfortunately, there is no guarantee that teachers will continue to implement the knowledge gained after professional development sessions are completed (Gibson & Brooks, 2012; Vazquez-Bernal et al., 2011).

A second limitation of the project is that because kindergarten is not a grade in which students are administered state-mandated reading tests, the building administrators tend not to observe kindergarten classrooms frequently, allowing teachers more flexibility in conducting instruction. Thus, there is the possibility that without ongoing guidance and encouragement, teachers may revert to former classroom practices. With no accountability presented by standardized assessment, teachers could easily continue to use assessment practices that do not accurately reflect a student's literacy level (Bloom, 1968; Guskey, 2010). Specifically, teachers could continue the practice of using subjectivity as part of the assessment process, as many teachers strongly believe in their judgment calls (Bloom, 1978).

A third limitation is the possibility that information presented during training and detailed in the manual may be misapplied. For example, although the project is directed toward low achievers, teachers may attempt to use the techniques with all learners.

A fourth limitation is the possibility that despite any initial enthusiasm for the suggested classroom activities, teachers may become discouraged if they do not see immediate results in student achievement. Although activities in the manual are easily created, some users may find the preparation time consuming. If teachers do not see an immediate student achievement gain, they might feel that time was wasted and be discouraged from creating more activities (Richards & Skolits, 2009; Shriner et al., 2009).

Alternative Solutions

The main finding of this study was that teacher behavior needed to be changed regarding the selection and implementation of literacy center activities for low-achieving students. A workshop-based training project was selected to achieve the change in teacher behavior. One alternative to a workshop-based professional development project would be to create a website for kindergarten teachers with the content of the manual embedded online and a discussion forum for teachers to share their ideas on how to implement assessment-based instruction within the literacy center. One advantage of this alternative would be elimination of printing costs. An additional advantage would be that the website could span an entire year, or longer, as opposed to the limited duration of workshop sessions.

Another alternative would be to create an online course that would have the advantage of extending the amount of content that could be covered. Extended content

would include elaborating on the topic of mastery learning, providing examples of objective assessments for kindergarten, and enriching the number of activities for the five areas of reading. The online course would have the secondary advantage of the ability to be shared beyond the local school site.

One more alternative would be to share information through a blog. After the information has been received, a blog has an advantage of sharing experiences, concerns, successes, and so forth on a daily basis, rather than waiting for a predetermined meeting. The ability to be interactive and engage in conversations could offer support as participants learn about and implement new learning activities.

Analysis of Learning

The research process I engaged in during the doctoral study was rigorous and complex. Although I gained general background in research during my master's and specialist programs, it was not until I progressed to the doctoral study that I understood how careful research can inform practice. I learned to apply the techniques of qualitative research to classroom observation, and I experienced the detailed labor of transcribing qualitative data into an analytical format. It became evident that my graduate coursework, the process of drafting multiple versions of the paper, and the guidance of my committee all combined to provide me with confidence in my own research skills along with heightened respect for others who have produced qualitative research. Further, I learned how to define a research problem from the broader topic, conduct a scholarly literature review, and write in a neutral, academic tone with proper citations. I learned to pay attention to the source of the citation, as not all references carry equal weight in the scholarly community.

Scholarship

My goal in beginning this doctoral journey was to become a scholarly writer of research. The intent was to create a doctoral study project that would make a difference in kindergarten classrooms, directly impacting the learning of low-achieving literacy learners. The coursework provided by Walden provided the necessary knowledge to undertake the challenge of completing a doctoral study. The doctoral project study itself is an example of scholarship, as the knowledge and resources contained in the study will contribute positively to classroom teachers' efforts to identify student needs and select activities, which will, in turn, improve student achievement.

As I reviewed many works of peer-reviewed literature, previous research supported the thought processes that led to the basis of the study. Research literature and data demonstrated areas of weakness in reading achievement at the local and national levels. Saturation of the literature was achieved to support the project study. The use of current peer-reviewed literature aided in displaying scholarship throughout the project study.

The "Literacy Activities" manual created for the project study will be shared with kindergarten teachers during professional development. Offering the opportunity to try some of the research-based activities and reviewing feedback will allow the enhancement of the manual. Creating a project such as a research-based manual, determining its effectiveness in promoting student literacy achievement, and revising as needed to improve the quality of the manual demonstrate scholarly work.

To be scholarly work, this project study needed to have the capacity to be used by an unlimited number of teachers working with young, struggling readers. The project

was created to meet the needs of these teachers in relation to having access to research-based literacy activities. Low-achieving students were the population identified as needing more support. The use of the literacy activities manual is not limited to the kindergarten teachers at the project site. The manual could be shared throughout the district in order to improve the literacy success of young learners.

Project Development and Evaluation

The doctoral project evolved from the analysis of data concerning high percentages of students not achieving mastery of literacy skills. The population of students has changed dramatically over the years, and the diverse population of learners at the project site requires new approaches to literacy opportunities. Preparing differentiated activities for a variety of literacy skills is needed.

The development of the project was a result of the data collected from kindergarten teachers at the project site. Once it was determined that low-achieving students' literacy needs were not being met, I conducted a literature review on how best to deliver information through a professional development opportunity. Research indicated the most efficient means of ensuring that participants would be engaged and that knowledge gained would be implemented after the professional development. In addition, research-based literacy activities were obtained to be compiled into a manual.

Gathering data from the participants was enlightening, as they talked about their classroom practices and beliefs related to meeting the needs of their students in literacy centers. In observing classrooms after the analysis of assessment and interview data, it was clear that low-achieving students were not building literacy skills, although

differentiation was seen in most classes. Analysis of all data determined the focus for the project.

As the creation of the project began, I read peer-reviewed articles to determine the pros and cons of various professional development programs. As I read, it became clear that in-service professional development was the best fit for sharing the study's results and delivering a manual of literacy activities. I also searched to find the research-based activities that would be used in the manual. Being a veteran teacher of 21 years in kindergarten, I had firsthand experience working with low-achieving literacy learners. These experiences, along with the data collected from the study, contributed to the contents of the manual.

To determine whether the project is effective, it will be important to gather feedback from teachers after they have had the opportunity to determine student ability levels through objective assessments and implement subsequent literacy activities in their classrooms. The evaluation for the project study has not been conducted. In determining how teachers would document feedback and the amount of time given to implement literacy activities, it was decided that monthly follow-up professional development sessions would be held to receive feedback regarding assessment practices, implementation of literacy activities, and the impact of these activities on low-achieving students' literacy skills.

Until the participants assess students' literacy levels and implement selected literacy activities, it will be impossible to determine the impact on student achievement. I anticipate ongoing changes to the manual as use takes place. A variety of frustrations and

negative experiences may occur with the creation and implementation of literacy activities. Room for improvement in this project is anticipated.

Evaluating assessment practices and the manual will be important in determining the impact it has on student literacy achievement. As students become engaged with the activities, the most beneficial feedback will be how the students respond to the activities and the gains made with mastery of literacy skills. Revisions to the manual will be made before sharing it with other kindergarten classes in the district. The evaluation should be instrumental in revising the manual to maximize its effectiveness in meeting low-achieving students' literacy needs, leading to an increase in the mastery of literacy skills.

Leadership and Change

Throughout the doctoral process, it has become clear that true leaders inspire others to improve their profession. Being a leader requires a willingness to learn more, even when it means stepping out of one's comfort zone to try something new. Leaders have to be willing to step up and make a difference in their classroom and school.

Being a leader within the school setting does not come without challenges. Many colleagues within the school may be resistant to change. A good leader takes time to listen and work with these people, seeking to gain their confidence and support. This task will be an important aspect of leadership in guiding the professional development sessions and introducing the literacy manual. After presenting the study results, I will need to emphasize the many ways in which the manual can be used to build the literacy skills of low-achieving students. As teachers gain an understanding of the benefits for their planning and student achievement, they may more readily agree to try some new activities. As the teachers use the manual and reconvene for monthly sessions,

constructive feedback will be important in creating revisions. As a leader, I will need to encourage feedback and be open to suggestions and input from all teachers.

As teachers determine students' ability levels using objective assessments and implement new literacy activities, change occurs for teachers and students alike. A change in teachers occurs as they try new things, improving their classroom practices and teaching craft. A change for students occurs as they are given multiple opportunities to master skills, increasing the likelihood of literacy success.

Self-Reflection

Reflecting on my journey through the doctoral process allows the realization that I have grown academically and as a leader in my school. Course assignments offered preparation for being a researcher and project developer. Conducting the research and then delivering the results and subsequent manual enhanced my leadership skills.

Scholar

Being in the field of education for 21 years, I consider myself a lifelong learner. I have always sought avenues to be a better teacher and activities that could be used to meet the needs of all my students. Differentiation became an integral part of my classroom with the Reading First initiative in 2002. The one component missing from my professional career was being actively involved in research. Prior to participating in the doctoral program at Walden, I had never considered myself a scholar. I understand that I was a scholar as I progressed through the master's and specialist programs at Walden. The difference is that I now have advanced experience in seeking knowledge relating to educational issues from research literature. Understanding how best to search and compile information will help with any further research endeavors I pursue.

Learning to accept input and constructive criticism from classmates and instructors was difficult for me. As I started to accept these, however, I realized that they enhanced my knowledge and deepened the scholarly language in my assignments and papers. It was difficult engaging in the online format at times. Often, I desired a face-to-face conversation, but I learned to be self-sufficient and a more active problem solver with the online format. The one thing I enjoyed the most was working at my own pace. I always worked ahead with the modules and found that to work best with my personal obligations.

A surprising accomplishment was my enjoyment in researching topics of interest. When I first began my research through the Walden online library, I was lost in what seemed to be endless articles. As I became more accustomed to research, I learned how to fine tune a topic, limiting the number of articles offered. Having research to support one's ideas and suggestions is very important in a professional field. Others will likely embrace changes more readily when previous research supports these decisions. It was also through my journey that I learned that I am clearly drawn toward qualitative research. I enjoy the narratives that qualitative research provides.

Practitioner

My 21 years of practitioner experience in education heightened my experience as a practitioner involved in the research process. Due to the wealth of background knowledge I had accumulated over the years, the topics covered in the coursework and study were relatable. Being a kindergarten classroom teacher complemented my efforts in conducting the research study. The connection of my school and the project study made the study interesting and important on a personal as well as a professional level.

The focus and project of the research study can make a difference to my immediate learning environment as well as throughout the district.

As a practitioner of research, my knowledge does not have to end this doctoral study. I can use the experiences I have engaged in to aid in researching other educational related topics. I can use this research to continue growing as a professional.

Project Developer

The time devoted to developing a research-based project that has the potential of enhancing literacy skills through a transference of knowledge and from the implementation aspect for teachers is worthwhile. In addition, the positive impact using the manual could have on student achievement in literacy is noteworthy as well. The data collected steered the project development to address correctly identifying literacy ability levels and the selection of applicable activities. The review of literature provided support for delivering knowledge via in-service professional development and aided in the selection of activities for the literacy manual. As I developed the project, I thought about the participants and their comments on using teacher judgment in determining ability levels. I was sure to include in the professional development research supported proof on the need for objective assessments.

I am excited about the professional developments and distribution of the literacy manual. The feedback I receive will be instrumental in making revisions that will make the manual more useful and effective for kindergarten teachers of low-achieving literacy learners. The importance of the professional developments and manual is that it has the potential to help young, low-achieving students master literacy skills, ensuring their progress in becoming successful readers and lifelong learners.

Future Research

The current study addressed literacy center implementation practices relating to mastery learning. Further research could expand on kindergarten literacy centers, addressing topics such as optimal use of collaborative or independent learning activities; the role of games and manipulatives; the use of skills worksheets versus integrated or authentic literacy opportunities; and alternative approaches to student accountability. Future research could also address the wider topic of benefits and limits of mastery learning at the kindergarten level and eventually explore if literacy centers are the best classroom organization to afford mastery learning.

In addition, the study addressed needs of the lower-achieving kindergarten students, as driven by the local problem. Future research could expand the scope of investigation to consider how average and above-average achievers may receive heightened benefit from literacy centers.

Because a high percentage of low achievers in the study were English language learners, future research could more directly address this student population. Specifically, research could investigate whether English language learners benefit differently than English proficient learners from activities related to phonics and phonemic awareness; whether English language learners require more attention to auditory discrimination; and the role of English vocabulary in reading achievement among English language learners.

Conclusion

This doctoral project study was written to address the local problem of a high proportion of below-grade reading scores at the completion of kindergarten. Using the

data collected from 11 participants at the local school through assessments, individual interviews, and classroom observations, it was evident that low-achieving students were not engaged in literacy activities that was on their ability level. While differentiation was noted during interviews and observed in classrooms, low-achieving learners did not demonstrate the ability to master tasks. The in-service professional developments and literacy manual was develop with the needs of these learners in mind. The manual offers research-based activities to meet the literacy needs of low-achievers without having to access other references.

Being involved in the doctoral program and the development of a doctoral project study have enlightened my thoughts as a practitioner. Where research had not been a source of information for my practices prior to bring a part of the doctoral program, I now know the importance of making decisions supported by research literature.

The final product has the possibility of creating social change at the local school site as well as at the district level. Meeting the literacy needs of all learners can be a challenge for kindergarten teachers. As kindergarten teachers use the manual and see the benefits it can offer in improving student achievement, their enthusiasm may increase and more activities implemented. Once feedback is obtained and revisions made, the manual can be shared with first grade teachers at the local school and online by our literacy specialist for the district system, allowing many more kindergarten and first grade teachers to access and implement the manual. Developing additional manuals is a goal for my future. It is my desire that this doctoral project study will have a positive impact on the classroom practices of kindergarten teachers and literacy achievement of kindergarten students.

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Appendix A: Letter of Cooperation

Peachtree Elementary School
Kara Dutton

12/13/13

Dear Crystal Cowen,

Based on my review of your research proposal, I give permission for you to conduct the study entitled, Evaluating the Fidelity of Literacy Center Implementation to Principles of Mastery Learning within Peachtree Elementary School. As part of this study, I authorize you to recruit kindergarten teachers, conduct one interview and two observations, obtain data from GKIDS and kindergarten profile sheets, allow participants to engage in member checks to ensure accuracy of analysis, and disseminate results within a grade-level meeting. Individuals' participation will be voluntary and at their own discretion.

We understand that our organization's responsibilities include: Participation of kindergarten teachers in interviews and observations, the observations of kindergarten classrooms during literacy center, and the attainment of GKIDS and profile sheet data. We reserve the right to withdraw from the study at any time if our circumstances change.

I confirm that I am authorized to approve research in this setting.

I understand that the data collected will remain entirely confidential and may not be provided to anyone outside of the research team without permission from the Walden University IRB.

Sincerely,

Kara L. Dutton

Walden University policy on electronic signatures: An electronic signature is just as valid as a written signature as long as both parties have agreed to conduct the transaction electronically. Electronic signatures are regulated by the Uniform Electronic Transactions Act. Electronic signatures are only valid when the signer is either (a) the sender of the email, or (b) copied on the email containing the signed document. Legally an "electronic signature" can be the person's typed name, their email address, or any other identifying marker. Walden University staff verify any electronic signatures that do not originate from a password-protected source (i.e., an email address officially on file with Walden).

Appendix B: Consent Form

CONSENT FORM

You are invited to take part in a research study of kindergarten literacy center implementation practices. The researcher is inviting kindergarten teachers to be in the study. This form is part of a process called “informed consent” to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to take part.

This study is being conducted by a researcher named Crystal Cowen, who is a doctoral student at Walden University. You may already know the researcher as a fellow kindergarten teacher and as the kindergarten grade level chair, but this study is separate from that role.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the implementation of literacy centers to improve reading skills of kindergarten students.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to:

- Take part in one interview, lasting 20-30 minutes. Interviews will be audio recorded.
- Give researcher permission to obtain Profile Sheet data from Peachtree Elementary’s shared drive relating to class reading levels (January and May). Data will be compiled by percentages of students at various reading levels per class.
- Give researcher class GKIDS class level report data obtained from <https://gkids.tsars.uga.edu/start> (January and May). Data will be compiled by percentages of students not mastering, mastering, and exceeding each literacy skill per class.
- Take part in two classroom observations during literacy center block (January and May), lasting 30-45 minutes.
- Take part in three member checking sessions, one after each data collection step, lasting 15 minutes

Here are some sample interview questions:

- How would you define the term “literacy centers”?
- What are your thoughts on literacy center implementation?
- Can you describe how activities are chosen for your literacy centers?

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

This study is voluntary. Everyone will respect your decision of whether or not you choose to be in the study. No one at Peachtree Elementary will treat you differently if you decide not to be in the study. If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind later. You may stop at any time.

Declining or discontinuing participation in the study will not negatively impact the participant’s relationship with the researcher.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

Being in this type of study involves some risk of the minor discomforts that can be encountered in daily life, such as anxiety or stress. Being in this study would not pose risk to your safety or wellbeing.

Potential benefits include the obtaining of a manual that focuses on the 5 components of reading and provides a variety of differentiated ideas/activities to meet the needs of and challenges all learners.

Payment:

No payments will be given.

Privacy:

Any information you provide will be kept confidential. The researcher will not use your personal information for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in the study reports. Data will be kept secure by password protection on the researcher's home computer. Data will be kept for a period of at least 5 years, as required by the university.

Contacts and Questions:

You may ask any questions you have now. Or if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher via 706-870-2817 or crystalbcowen@comcast.net. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call Dr. Leilani Endicott. She is the Walden University representative who can discuss this with you. Her phone number is 612-312-1210. Walden University's approval number for this study is 01-07-14-017110 and it expires on January 6, 2015.

The researcher will give you a copy of this form to keep.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information and I feel I understand the study well enough to make a decision about my involvement. By signing below, I understand that I am agreeing to the terms described above.

Printed Name of Participant

Date of consent

Participant's Signature

Researcher's Signature

Appendix C: Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol

The purpose of this interview is to gain an understanding of your thoughts toward literacy centers and your implementation practices.

Teacher:

Date:

How many years have you implemented literacy centers in your classroom?

What percentage of your reading instructional time do students spend in literacy centers activities? How many minutes per day, how many days per week?

How would you define the term “literacy centers”?

What are your thoughts on literacy center implementation?

Probes – Why do you like/dislike them? Important/not important?

Describe how literacy centers can be effective at fostering student’s reading growth.

Probes - Examples?

Can you describe how activities are chosen for your literacy centers?

Probes – Are activities selected to cover all 5 areas of reading? One center for each or an integration?

How would you define the term “differentiated instruction”?

Does differentiation occur in the literacy centers? If so, how?

What are your feelings on differentiation?

Can you describe how students are grouped in your literacy centers?

Are assessments used to determine the ability level of each child?

Probes - If so, what? How are these assessments used?

Do students work independently, collaboratively, or a combination?

Probes – Give examples. Percentage of times.

Appendix D: Observation Protocol

Observational Protocol and Recording Sheet

Date of observation:

Time of observation:

Length of observation:

Foreshadowed questions:

What percentage of reading instructional time do students spend in literacy center activities?

How many minutes per day, how many days per week?

Are students working independently and/or in small groups? What percentage for each?

Are center activities focused on all 5 components of reading (e.g. phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, comprehension, fluency)?

Is there any evidence that students are placed into activities based on need and ability level (small and independent groupings)?

| Observation | Descriptive Notes – Evidence that students are working at varying ability levels | Reflective Notes |
|---|--|------------------|
| Phonemic Awareness (e.g. matching & picture sorts – rhymes, beginning, middle, ending sounds) | | |
| Phonics (e.g. word sorts by beginning, middle, ending sounds, matching letters to pictures, onsets & rimes) | | |

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| | | |
| Vocabulary (e.g. sight words) | | |
| Fluency (e.g. sight words, listening center, independent reading center, reader's theatre) | | |
| Comprehension (e.g. response to text) | | |
| Other | | |

Appendix E: Interview Data

Teacher A

C: How many years have you implemented literacy centers in your classroom?

TEACHER A: Since I first started teaching here in 1997.

C: Has it all been in kindergarten?

TEACHER A: Only kindergarten.

C: How have they changed?

TEACHER A: I don't think mine have changed that much. I have always tried to have two centers that were fairly independent that were not so academic and then two centers that were academic.

C: What do you mean two that were not academic?

TEACHER A: Not as academic, like making something that they would have to label or write a sentence about it. It involved them doing something that was independent so they didn't have to keep asking me what does this word say.

C: Are they based on whatever you are talking about?

TEACHER A: Yes, particularly at the beginning because we use to be more thematic so everything was based around the theme we were doing. Now as we have gone through literacy collaborative and outcome based learning and all these other things, people have changed the emphasis on what goes on. The centers are probably more literacy based now then use to be because I was happy to have them draw or paint, I use to have a block center where they would make something with the blocks that had to do with what we were studying then write a sentence that would say: At the blocks I made ...

C: So when you are talking about they are making something is that making a picture, doing a craft...

TEACHER A: It might be drawing a picture or putting pieces together to make something to do with a theme, but it is more academic now. We use to have SIA, which was a similar thing where centers were set up around the room that had a literacy component to them. You might write a sentence that tells what you have done. It wasn't part of our literacy time, it was another time. I think I try harder to make it more intensive at the literacy centers.

C: How would you define the term literacy center:

TEACHER A: What? That's a horrible question. Being English, I probably have a different idea about literacy. I include in literacy drama, acting out, and movement, and

anything that gets them speaking. As years have gone on I do less movement. I use to have a puppet center now I don't have one, although in the back of mind I feel I should still be doing a puppet center because that got some of the really quiet children talking. They would talk through the puppet where they would normally not talk. But it is hard to do that in a center when you and your partner are trying to talk and there is chaos reigning in the rest of the room and the puppet center could get pretty loud. So it is about developing reading and writing skills and really helping them develop those skills. It is not just saying put down what you hear. When I first started we were happy if students were just writing an initial letter for words. Now over time the expectations have gotten higher and higher. One year it was 3 sentences that were spelt well and now we are about to 2 sentences that are spelt well. To me literacy is any of those things. But the centers have to be aligned with what you want to achieve. They can't be too loosey-goosey. You have to know what you are trying to teach. If you are trying to teach a reading skill you have to be sure you are teaching that reading skill and they are practicing it.

C: So what are your thoughts on literacy centers? Do you like/dislike them?

TEACHER A: I love reading centers. I wish I could do more of them. I love watching the kids "get it". So many of them come in not being able to read and seeing gradually the light come on and then suddenly they are like I can read this book. It is a fabulous thing to teach reading, I think it is one of the best things you can do. There important because how can you reach everybody's needs unless you are meeting in small groups. I do feel I need more some groups because I have such wide ability levels in them, but it is too difficult t manage that many groups. I have students that can read everything in the room, then I have some that are on an "E" or a "F" but still need skills practice.

C: Describe how literacy centers can be effective at fostering student's reading growth.

TEACHER A: I start off with my low students just putting pictures and words together and then when they can see that the word means what the picture is and they make the connection between text and picture. It is a like a reading series you gradually add to it, but the most important thing is in the early stages to make it relevant to them and they understand. You can't give them a whole bunch of words they don't know. You also have to teach sight words in there that doesn't usually have a connection with a picture. I try to get excited in their reading group so they can see I am excited about their gaining ability and I want them to be excited. Their excitement leads to satisfaction in doing a good job.

C: Can you describe how your activities are chosen for you literacy centers?

TEACHER A: My group is always doing some kind of leveled reader work. Sometimes I include writing in it as well because those things go hand in hand. I pull out things they need to be aware of like a /sh/ sound, isolating what the problem is and solving it, beginning, middle, end. My paras group usually has some kind of theme related activity

that includes reading and often writing. This week they are talking about the sun, so they are making the sun rising, mid-day, and setting, drawing a picture of what they are doing at those times and writing a sentence about what they are doing at those times. One of the groups is always making words of some kind. They usually being with one of the letters of the alphabet and they have to make something simple and then they have to put words and pictures together and as they get more developed they write a sentence about it. I am trying to encourage the top group to chose a word and write a story about it. I use to have a listening center but I can't find anything that plays cassettes anymore. I am going to make another word center using magnetic letters or dry erase boards. Something that is similar to the other center, making words, writing sentences, drawing pictures.

C: You have four centers?

TEACHER A: Yes.

C: Do they stay in one center a day or rotate?

TEACHER A: They stay in one center a day. It always takes us the whole time to get our centers work completed. I tried to change to meeting with two reading groups but we weren't able to get all the work done.

C: So you have one day you don't do literacy centers?

TEACHER A: Yes, usually the first day we talk about letters and the centers for the week and what they will be doing in them and sometimes I read a book that has to do with it.

C: Your activities integrate the five areas of reading?

TEACHER A: Yes.

C: Can you define differentiated instruction.

TEACHER A: Meeting children's needs. It is obvious in your class who needs what, the really bright ones need to be pushed on and the low ones need encouragement and a lot of extra help. The work they are doing should reflect that.

C: Can you expand how you differentiate in your literacy centers?

TEACHER A: Some of my low students are still working on letters and sounds. We just reassessed them and some still only know one sound. Most of my work with them is trying to build up their sounds so they can do all the other stuff. For them it is writing letters, looking at letters, sorting letters, looking at books with just one word so they can feel like they are reading a book so they know where we are going with this.

C: What about your average students?

TEACHER A: Making words, writing sentences using the words. In my center it depends on the book we are reading. I pull out things that are appropriate to their level and needs. My group is where we really differentiate the most. In word works, the babies only get a

picture and a word by it, the other ones write a sentence. The higher ones write a story. I haven't started doing this yet, but I would like them to do some research and find out more about something, like an animal.

C: How long is your literacy center block?

TEACHER A: About 40 minutes.

C: What are your feelings of differentiation, important?

TEACHER A: Of course, you always try to meet their needs.

C: How do you group your students in your literacy centers?

TEACHER A: Homogeneous

C: Do they work independently, collaboratively, or both?

TEACHER A: It is independent. When you start collaborating that can cause problems and I really need them to be independent.

C: Do they ever complete the work and have other activities they do?

TEACHER A: I have a series of papers that have to do with literacy. So if they finish they can go take one of those. I also have a box of thematic books that they can choose from, but usually they don't get finished.

C: Do you have reading center or browsing boxes?

TEACHER A: No, they have those on their tables but they seem to get bored with them.

C: What assessments do you use to determine the ability level of your students?

TEACHER A: Fountas & Pinnell checklists for letters and sounds.

C: How do you use these assessments?

TEACHER A: That is how I put them into groups and decide what books to use for guided reading. I don't use it to analyze their mistakes as I feel I know that by working with them in a reading group. I know where they are making mistakes.

Teacher B

C: How many years have you implemented literacy centers?

TEACHER B: This is my first year but I did it when I did my long term sub and when I student taught.

C: So how many years would you say that is total?

TEACHER B: 2 years.

C: How would you define the term literacy centers?

TEACHER B: Working on reading, writing, and integrating social studies and science with that. A mixture of everything.

C: Do you see it as an instructional tool?

TEACHER B: yes

C: What are your thoughts on literacy centers?

TEACHER B: I like them because I can differentiate what the students need to work on and then I can pull them at that time to help them work on that skill. Like one of my centers is a pocketchart for some of them I did letter recognition, upper and lowercase, some were making rhyming words and putting word families together.

C: Why do you think it is important?

TEACHER B: I can differentiate and students can work with each other.

C: Describe how literacy centers can be effective at fostering student's reading growth.

TEACHER B: I use it because they can meet with me one day and my para one day and then they're working on their own on the skills, such as building and reading sight words, find them in the room and they can find them in books with me. That helps them get to another level.

C: You have one group meet with you a day and one with your para?

TEACHER B: Yes

C: How many groups are working independently?

TEACHER B: 3.

C: Do they work with you a little bit then do something else?

TEACHER B: They work with me the whole time.

C: Can you describe how you choose your activities for you literacy centers?

TEACHER B: I look at what standards we need to cover in the 9 weeks and I pull from that and I also pull whatever our topics are. Like I am doing things with night and day but

it also has to do with our standards that we have. I also pull our sight words that we are working on.

C: In your literacy centers do they cover all the 5 areas of reading?

TEACHER B: I try to.

C: Do you have one center for each of those or an integration?

TEACHER B: They might integrate more than one.

C: How would you define the term differentiated instruction?

TEACHER B: I define it as their growth, like if they need to work on one area they need to accomplish that area before can move on to something else.

C: Can you elaborate on how you differentiate in your literacy centers?

TEACHER B: right now for my word work, my 3 higher groups have words, letters and sentences and they have to put it in the column that it belongs in, my 2 lower groups are still building their names because I still have a few that still cannot work with their names. Their making a rocket and they have to build their name with their rocket and then if the finish that, which most probably will not, they can try the other activity.

C: What else are your lower kids doing?

TEACHER B: With my para they are making a sight word book, so they learn their sight word for the day and they have to fill in the book with that word in a sentence. Like the picture is there and the sentence is there and they have to fill it in. My higher groups are writing their own sentences. For listening, my lower ones have to listen to the story and draw a picture of what happened and they can write a sentence or label their picture and the higher kids have to draw a picture, write 2 sentences, and tell what they liked about the story.

C: How long are your literacy centers?

TEACHER B: 30-35 minutes, at the end they turn it in to the completed or not completed box. I look at that before they go outside, if they need extra help they stay inside and get help from my para.

C: What are your feelings on differentiation?

TEACHER B: I really like it because I was one of those low students and I would shut down if I had to do what a higher student did and I had no clue what to do. In my classroom they don't think they are lower or anything they just know they are doing something different. It gets them to where they need to be.

C: Can you describe how you group your students?

TEACHER B: They do. They come in and they pick a center. They know they can't go to the same center during the week.

C: The groups are heterogeneous then?

TEACHER B: Yes, they have a box with their color and they know to take the activity from their color. So the blue group knows to take a bag with a blue dot. I go over everything on Monday so they all know what to do.

C: Are assessments used to determine the ability levels of your students?

TEACHER B: I use the F&P, letter and letter sound checklists .

C: How do you use those assessments?

TEACHER B: I have one or two that still need to work on their letters so they sometimes have an extra activity that focuses on letters, like separating lower case and capital letters.

C: In your centers, do the students work independently, collaboratively, or both?

TEACHER B: Independently, except for read to someone in which they would be working with someone. They switch back and forth.

C: So there could be a lower student and a higher student?

TEACHER B: Yes, I try to work it that way.

C: Do you use that to your advantage?

TEACHER B: Right now they are just looking at the pictures and talking about it. Sometimes the higher student will read to the lower student if the lower student will listen. My low students like to read by themselves, which is okay because I know they are reading because I can hear them.

C: So collaboratively they are doing more of a book talk?

TEACHER B: Yes

C: Do you have games they play?

TEACHER B: Sometimes. A lot of the games are played when they are with Ruthanne, like sight words and letter games so she work with them, so she knows they are playing and playing correctly.

Teacher C

C: How many years have you implemented literacy centers?

TEACHER C: This is the second year.

C: All in kindergarten?

TEACHER C: Yes.

C: How would you define the term literacy center?

TEACHER C: Different stations set up around the room working on different skills that the kids rotate through on different topics we are learning about.

C: Do they do one center a day?

TEACHER C: My students do, each group stays at that one center for the whole time.

C: You mentioned they are based on the topic you are talking about, does that mean you are integrating your science and social studies?

TEACHER C: Not so much. More on the LOCC, the schedule of the literacy standards for each quarter. We have some that we focus on for a week or two weeks. Like now we are working on medial vowels and the blend we are working on.

C: What are your thoughts on literacy centers? Do you like/dislike them?

TEACHER C: I do like them. I think it is a good way to review a lot of different things at the same time, to review things we have been working on. And a good way to see where each of them are at because they do them independently or as a team, without teacher support. It is a good way to see where each group is standing on a skill. I feel you can cover more ground that way. There are different things going on in each center.

C: How do you think literacy centers are effective at fostering a student's reading growth?

TEACHER C: With ours, each center is a different skill so throughout the week they are going to be exposed to 5 different skills that they are reviewing and getting extra practice on in the different areas of reading. Like letters, sounds, sight words, so they get an accumulation throughout the week.

C: Do your centers focus on one area of reading in each center or an integration?

TEACHER C: Depending on the week. Sometimes I do a theme, like winter, and sometimes I integrate our science and social studies. I try to do a phonics sound station, a sight word station, those are definite every week. Also something that involves writing every week. I do try to hit all 5 areas, but it doesn't happen every week.

C: You said you choose your activities based on the AKS, do you choose them based on anything else?

TEACHER C: I try to follow the guideline for the 9 weeks and I block off what needs to happen first, if something is a precursor to another skill. We cover a lot of skills during the morning message, so whatever we are teaching during that time will be in one of the buckets to review and reinforce.

C: How would you define the term differentiated instruction?

TEACHER C: Either different activities for different students or groups based on their level that have the same goal at the end or maybe the same activity with different materials. For reading I use different materials or ways to reach the same result. For like sight words, my ones that know a lot of sight words will do something more in depth with sight words, maybe writing sentences with their sight words, or maybe I supply the sight word sentence and they draw a picture to match. The middle sight word group is doing a word wall activity, writing down the words that have 3 letters in it, or words that start with a certain letter, the low ones that are still learning letters and sounds and are not quite ready for sight words I still have them doing something with sight words but a step down. Like I will give them a couple of words and magnetic letters to build them.

C: Can you tell me how you differentiate in your other centers?

TEACHER C: I have a technology one and each group has a different activity or game. I do Starfall for the lower ones to work on letter sounds, the higher group may do letter sound bingo where they choose upper or lower case and it says the sound but they have to find the letter. There is spelling sight word practice. For vowels, the lower group does a lot of picture sorts, the middle group has the picture and the word, the higher kids also sort them but then will have some kind of work sheet or writing down the words in each group.

C: What do you think about differentiation?

TEACHER C: I like it, I could do more of it. I use buckets and it is hard to put all the different things in there though. They have a folder that they put their work in if they have a work sheet.

C: How do they know what to do?

TEACHER C: They do whatever is in the bucket for the day. I have to switch out each day what is in the bucket for the group, like manipulatives and it makes it hard.

C: These are mixed ability groups?

TEACHER C: No, they are the same. It builds a sense of team work. So if they are in the center and they have a question they can ask each other. People in the group change if they progress.

C: How do you know if they are mastering the skills in the literacy centers?

TEACHER C: If it is something with writing or a work sheet, I look at that. I can also tell in the guided reading group if they have mastered a skill. It is a lot of teacher observation. If they are doing technology I can see them. Also, each of my kids have individual flash cards. They have lower and upper case letters, one on each card. We go through the sheet that has all the letters on it and letters they know go on one binder ring with a note that this these are the ones I know and should review a couple of time each week and then, depending on the student, I pick 3-5 that they are still working on to put on another binder ring and those go home and school every day to practice and the parents help them read those everyday and they check them off on a list. It really helps me see how they are doing with their letters. Once they know all their letters, I use the same flashcard system for sight words.

C: How do you determine what sight words to work with in the literacy center?

TEACHER C: The students are pretty much working on the same sight words. It is based on what they are working on, where they are at ability wise. In the group there might be a little difference.

C: What kind of assessments do you use to determine the ability levels of your students?

TEACHER C: Flashcards mainly because it is that daily assessment, a lot of observation, especially when they come to me for guided reading , just seeing what skills they are picking up on, Fountas & Pinnell for reading levels. Maggie used it at the beginning of the year and I used it again in December. I like it, I don't know everything about the system, but I know about giving the running records.

C: So you mentioned your students working collaboratively, but they also work independently as well?

TEACHER C: Yes

C: Do they ever complete all the work in their bucket? And if they do, what do they do next?

TEACHER C: The folder they take with them, has all the poems that we have done in it and they have to go back and find the sight words in the poems and the higher level ones can reread the poems, they can read it to each other or independently but they have to stay at their station.

C: You mentioned they play online games, do they have other games that they play?

TEACHER C: I have several different activities, I have driving cars on a parking lot with sight words and go fishing for sight words.

C: How do you determine if a student has mastered a skill and is ready to move on?

TEACHER C: Through observations and how they are doing with the flashcards. We had one student that just blossomed. She has always been eager to learn but was not picking it up, her name starts with letter J and she doesn't know that letter so it has been on her flashcard ring since August because she should know the letters in her name. She has been picking up on a lot more. During the morning work I write a sentence with our sight words, we do 5 a week, and the sentence only includes those sight words, or 90% of those sight words and they have to write it in their journal and draw a picture to match so I know they are understanding what they are reading. The after calendar we go over it together and they find upper case letter, punctuation, sight words, vowels, consonants too. They do that, I did it for a week or 2 to model it, now each of them has a job to find something. That shows me a lot about what they know. The student has been raising her hand a lot more and wanting to find things more, including letters that were not on her flashcards. So I went through extra activities to see which ones she now knows and found she has picked up on more. So it is mainly through observations, watching them in the classroom.

C: Have you had kids that struggled that you had to move back?

TEACHER C: My higher students progress super fast through sight words, but I have one that is teetering on the edge, she is very smart but she takes more time. She needs a little more practice and motivation. She belongs in that group, but the other ones are zooming faster. There are times I have move students down but they have no idea what the change means, high or low. Reading is more fluid for me because you are always working on the same skills and are just building. If they do not seem to be progressing as much in their group as others, I will bump them down one and then they can move back up later.

Teacher D

C: How many years have you implemented literacy centers in your classroom?

TEACHER D: 7

C: All in kindergarten?

TEACHER D: Yes

C: How would you define the term literacy center?

TEACHER D: Literacy centers for my classroom are a chance for me to work with small group, we do reading, writing, it is a chance for me to instill good reading skills. We use it to learn about the concepts of print, reading left to right, top to bottom, and it is a chance for me to assess where my children are at as far as reading and writing go .

C: So what are your thoughts on literacy centers? Like/dislike?

TEACHER D: I like literacy centers very much because it gives me a chance to work in small groups, it gives me a chance to get to know my kids, it gives them a chance to talk during literacy centers, to get their thoughts together because when it comes to writing, if they can't talk coherently I know they can't write because you can't write if you can't think about what you are going to say.

C: Do your kids stay in one literacy center a day or rotate?

TEACHER D: We do one center per day

C: How long do they last?

TEACHER D: With a mini lesson at the beginning and breaking out in groups the total time is about an hour and 15 minutes.

C: Describe how literacy centers can be effective at fostering student's reading growth.

TEACHER D: They are effective because a student has a chance at being in a small group setting, sometimes even one-on-one with an adult whether it is me or my paraprofessional and it gives you a chance to know exactly where that child is struggling, what they do know, what they don't know, what level they're at, it gives you that personal feeling that lets you know where they are.

C: How do you choose your activities for your literacy centers?

TEACHER D: I usually have a group of sight words that we are working with, I do a letter of the week. At the beginning of the year I assess my children to see what reading level they're at, and break them into ability level so I know what kind of activities my higher students. I focus on beginning, middle, end, sequencing stories. The lower kids work on letter sounds, letter identification and that kind of stuff.

C: Do you have a center for each of the 5 areas of reading or are they integrated within the centers?

TEACHER D: Integration of various skills. It might be writing, letter identification, word families, or sight words.

C: Are your students grouped heterogeneous or homogeneous?

TEACHER D: The literacy centers are grouped by ability. All same abilities, needs, and reading levels together.

C: How would you define the term differentiated instruction?

TEACHER D: Any changes you make for a student based upon their needs. It could be the whole group or one particular student. If I have a student with a physical disability and have trouble writing they could type or dictate instead of having to write. I have a student that has a lot of difficulty holding a pencil. So any change you make in your instruction for a child or a group.

C: Do you differentiate your literacy centers?

TEACHER D: Yes, the different reading levels for example. I have children that are below an A and need to work on concepts of print. Others are writing responses to what their favorite part of the book is. Another way is some of them are working on letter identification where others are working with sight words, doing activities, I might take a worksheet and for my lower group I have the identify what words or pictures that go with a letter where with my higher group I'll have them write a sentence about the pictures along with identifying the letter and picture

C: What assessments do you use to determine the ability levels of your students?

TEACHER D: Fountas and Pinnell, letter and letter sound identification checklist, when they start writing I have them label their picture and I can tell if they know the beginning sounds, if they can sound out part or all of a word, beginning, middle and end sounds of a word, and I use that to determine where I am going to go with the groups.

C: What about now as we are mid-year? How do you know if they are mastering skills?

TEACHER D: Still using Fountas and PInnell. I have moved some kids from a higher group to a lower group because they have been struggling with their work and I think maybe I am pushing them too hard and I move them to a group that is moving at a slower pace. If I see a kid that is accelerating I move them to a higher group. That way the group can all work on the same thing.

C: In your centers do the students work independently, collaboratively or a combination?

TEACHER D: It's a combination because if there is someone in a group that is struggling and someone else is a little higher I don't mind them helping. I don't want them doing the

work for them but I don't mind them helping. Two of the groups are guided, I have one and my para has one and the other two are working independently on what skills we have gone over.

C: Do you have any learning games that they play?

TEACHER D: We have some that are phonemic awareness games, I have sight word games, depending on which group it is that I give them a game, my lower group might just be matching letters where the other ones are matching sight words or using magnetic letters to spell out sight words then using those in sentence. The game depends on the ability of the group.

C: Are the games independent or do they play them together?

TEACHER D: There are partner games and independent games. Most are played with a partner so they can check each other.

Teacher E

C: How many years have you implemented literacy centers in your classroom?

TEACHER E: 10, all in kindergarten.

C: How would you define the term literacy center?

TEACHER E: For me it is a time for children to work independently, on their own, allowing me to work with other groups of students. They work on their own and I get to have the freedom of pulling groups.

C: How many literacy centers do you have?

TEACHER E: I have 4, they do them 4 days a week and they stay in one per day. One is teacher led and the other ones are independent. And then I pull from all groups. Whatever reading group I am meeting with they leave from the center they are in, come see me and then they go back.

C: So your para runs a center?

TEACHER E: She usually runs an art center.

C: Does your centers integrate science and social studies?

TEACHER E: Yes we do reading, math, art, and writing. ABC is a literacy one, then what ever we are covering in science and social studies is covered in writing.

C: What are your thoughts on literacy centers? Like/dislike are they important?

TEACHER E: I have always used them so it is kind of a comfort thing for me. I think you can hit on so many areas during them. And it is a time to reinforce things that I have already taught. I don't use new things per say in centers it is something they have usually seen or a skill that they can do on their own. They are practicing a skill that I have introduced. I think it is a good routine for them too because they know what to do, where to go, they have their independence. When they are done they know what their second center is, reading a book or the star box which has letters that they put in order or sight words.

C: Is a second center an extension of their work?

TEACHER E: Yes, when they're finished whatever their doing they do the next thing. They have something they have to do first.

C: How long are your literacy centers?

TEACHER E: About 30-45 minutes.

C: How do you think literacy centers are effective at fostering a student's reading growth?

TEACHER E: For me that is their time to come see me for reading but I think again just them working on their own with their independence. Also for the second center they usually get a book, not necessarily one of their leveled readers, but a book off the shelf that they look through for sight words they know in there. They spend time talking to other children about the pictures, about the book, what is going on. I have seen other children ask a higher level child to help them read it, help with words they don't know.

C: Your groups are mixed ability?

TEACHER E: No, they are same ability. But some kids in the group are higher than others. This is also the time that ESOL comes in.

C: I think you answered this, but you don't have one center for phonics, one for phonemic awareness?

TEACHER E: No, it is an integration of the skills.

C: How do you define the term differentiated instruction?

TEACHER E: Hitting on the various needs, obviously all children are not on the same level. So just helping all of them and knowing what level they are on and the ability to be there to help them where they are struggling or have those who are higher help some of the lower ones. It is pushing those who can and helping those who can't do it.

C: Does differentiation occur in your literacy centers?

TEACHER E: Yes.

C: Can you give me some examples beside math?

TEACHER E: Well maybe not, maybe that is something I need to work on.

C: Does every group do the same thing in the centers each day?

TEACHER E: Yes.

C: How about with the writing?

TEACHER E: Yes we do differentiate there. Like we did one with months the other day and my higher group wrote a sentence about the months, like My birthday is in January. And the lower group just copied the words. This is my ESOL time so the ESOL teacher works with those children on their center work and then she does her independent thing.

C: When they get finished and they're pulling books, those are not leveled readers?

TEACHER E: No, they are from the shelf. The leveled readers, in their browsing boxes are usually read after snack time.

C: What do you think about differentiation, do you think it is important?

TEACHER E: I think it is important but it is something I could work on more. It is hard

not to do it in a school like this where the students are so different, you have so many different levels. It is something that comes naturally but it is also good to make that effort to use it more.

C: What kind of assessments do you use to determine the ability levels of your students?

TEACHER E: I use Fountas & Pinnell for reading groups but I also noticed that doesn't match up with the books in the bookroom. The books in the book room are easier so whatever level they read for Fountas & Pinnell I pick a book that is a level higher for guided reading. As I am meeting with my groups I can see some kids just take off and I change the groups up as needed. For picking them in the literacy groups I did it by reading level so that way when I call them they are all leaving one center. Everything in literacy times is based around our reading groups. At the beginning of the year they were just random but as the reading groups formed and I came to know the students I formed the groups they are in now.

C: How do you determine if the students master their skills, like letters and sounds?

TEACHER E: I use flashcards. Teacher observation and my para pulls the kids during calendar time that are still struggling with letters and sight words.

C: Students work independently and collaboratively?

TEACHER E: Yes, they know to come up to me is disruptive and someone else can tell them what to do. It is really their time and it is funny to watch them work because they will talk to each other and say things like "No, that is now how you do that". They have learned to help each other. You always have a few that don't know where they are going and someone will take them over to the center board and explain it to them. It is a lot of practice in the beginning.

C: How do you know if they have mastered a skill and can go on to something more complex?

TEACHER E: I guess by the speed in which they are done, if everyone else is still working and they have already jumped up to their second center then it is obviously something that is pretty easy to them and they need something harder. As far as knowing letters and sounds, just by testing them. It is really a lot of teacher observation. At this age, you can't really give a test to see, which would be nice.

Teacher F

C: How many years have you implemented literacy centers in you classroom?

TEACHER F: 8 years.

C: That is all in kindergarten?

TEACHER F: Yes.

C: How would you define the term literacy centers?

TEACHER F: It is a space where all the students can be grouped by their level and also by there, in this case the centers I am doing now go by their choices. I think it depends on the learning style too. It is a time for the students to apply their knowledge from the mini lessons.

C: And they choose, but they go to every center within the week?

TEACHER F: Yes, I meet with small groups and then there is 5 centers.

C: This is Daily 5?

TEACHER F: Yes, the centers are read to self, read to someone, listen to reading, work on writing, and word work.

C: How many centers do they do a day?

TEACHER F: They do 2. They choose both centers unless they are working with me or the parapro.

C: What are your thoughts on literacy center implementation?

TEACHER F: I like Daily 5 because it gives them more choices and I can see who is taking the mini lesson a little extra. I like to see when they are working on writing they're writing poems, if our mini lesson is about writing poems. I can see who takes it a little bit higher, but also with lower students it is not very engaging at the beginning of the school year but I find it depends on the class you have if you can use Daily 5 at the beginning or in January.

C: So sometimes you don't use Daily 5 right at the beginning?

TEACHER F: No, if my class is low I won't start it until January.

C: Why would you not start it at the beginning of the year if they were low?

TEACHER F: They couldn't do listening to reading and be engaged, they couldn't do read to someone and word work.

C: So basically they couldn't complete the work independently?

TEACHER F: No

C: What did you have in your literacy centers then?

TEACHER F: I did 10 centers rotation. There would be 2-3 students instead of 5. They would work on various skills I was teaching in the mini lesson.

C: Your centers integrate the 5 areas of reading with Daily 5?

TEACHER F: Word work works with phonics and phonemic awareness, and they are by level so they know what to choose to do.

C: How do you know what activities to choose to use in your literacy centers?

TEACHER F: It depends on the skills I want them to be working on. That is changed probably every 2 weeks.

C: What kind of things do they do in the word work center?

TEACHER F: Sounding out words, using games with a dice and they put the letters together, I have a beginning and ending sounds for the ones that are still working on that. I have a sight word center, they have poetry folders they will be looking at for sight words, they will be reading those poems.

C: How long does each center time last?

TEACHER F: 20 minutes.

C: How would you define the term differentiated instruction?

TEACHER F: I think it is the opportunity we have to focus on each one of the skills the students need to learn. It depends on grouping the students by low and high and also by skills. I think differentiation is giving the opportunity to the students to progress at their own pace.

C: Do you like/dislike differentiation?

TEACHER F: Yes, because I think it is a way to keep the students motivated and keep them on task and without giving them frustrations. If they're with a higher student, they know they will get there. With differentiation they know they have to follow some steps for achieving that goal.

C: Your centers are mixed ability?

TEACHER F: Yes

C: How are your other centers, beside word work differentiated?

TEACHER F: Read to self they have their own book basket, so all the books are differentiated based on their reading level. Read to someone is mixed so if a low student is reading with a high student then the low student will be able to recognize that high student is reading with a voice and fluency and they ask questions. It is a more interactive center. So they know how to work collaboratively. In listen to reading they are working

on the computer. So they get on the level they are suppose to and there are 2 kids on the computer that are the same level. Work on writing is their journal and they write about anything they want and the low ones will be practicing print if they need help with that. Daily 5 helps them to be independent. They know where they are and they know what they are expected to do. My high kids are expected to write a whole page and the low ones are expected to write at least one sentence.

C: In the read to self, read to someone, and listen to reading, is all they do is reading? Do they have some kind of writing response to do?

TEACHER F: Students have a reader response journal so after they read a book they have to write.

C: How do you know if they are mastering the skills in literacy centers?

TEACHER F: When I have them in my small group. Some of the skills I reteach them or we review and read at my center so I know when they are not doing their work and also later we can check their reader journals. Most of the word work is done by my parent volunteer or parapro.

C: What assessments do you use to determine the ability level of your students?

TEACHER F: I think it will be the readers journal and my running records, charts that we use in our centers.

C: Do you use a letters and sounds checklists?

TEACHER F: We share at the end of the center and we check the kids work. We know if they did it the right way. Then we use a checklist too.

Teacher G

C: How many years have you implemented literacy centers in your classroom?

TEACHER G: for more than 10 years

C: What grade levels?

TEACHER G: first grade 4 years, kindergarten 2 years counting this year, second grade 5 years.

C: How would you define the term literacy centers?

TEACHER G: I would say exploration. What I mean by that it they are teaching themselves and it is hands on, they're engaged. With little children it is not always pen and paper because you would lose them.

C: What are your thoughts on literacy center implementation? Do you like/dislike them?

TEACHER G: I think it is necessary.

C: Why?

TEACHER G: The children need to be able to keep on moving as you change the activities. One year I didn't have the children rotate, I rotated the centers to the children, but they were still changing. And that was because they were so social that having them in groups they were talking too much. That was just that one year though, I normally have them rotate.

C: Do you think the literacy centers are important?

TEACHER G: Yes, definitely academically.

C: Can you describe how they can be effective at fostering a student's reading growth?

TEACHER G: for example, when they are reading with partners, they can teach each other and it helps to build self-esteem. And then also there are different formats like games, coloring, magnetic letters. You are doing different things.

C: How do you choose your activities for your literacy centers?

TEACHER G: Based on the AKS and I go online. And this 9 weeks I went through all of them as I was planning and I know when to assess them and everything. By the middle of the 9 weeks I'll start.

C: What do you mean you went online?

TEACHER G: I went online to get different activities for the centers. But for the AKS it is based on what we are given, our unit plans. I also went to the LOCK, they have writing and phonics too.

C: Talking about Common Core, do you integrate your science and social studies into your literacy centers?

TEACHER G: I was but I am not doing that right now.

C: How would you define the term differentiated instruction?

TEACHER G: Meeting the needs of the individuals.

C: Do you have differentiation within your literacy centers?

TEACHER G: I pull them out and differentiate. The centers themselves are not.

C: How do you group your students in the centers?

TEACHER G: They stay in their permanent seat and there could be an A, B, and C reader in the group. It is not based on their ability. It is based more on social skills, whether they are getting along or talking too much. And that is good for a lot of reasons.

C: Can you give me an example of how this is good?

TEACHER G: I have just a couple of children that are working on sounds and letters, so they can't necessarily read what is in their browsing boxes, but their partner can read to them or help them and then they can talk about it.

C: Do you use assessments to determine the ability levels of your students?

TEACHER G: I have always used Fountas & Pinnell. I use the running records and sight words from Fountas & Pinnell. I use the sight words for the report card and I use the Fountas & Pinnell running records to group them. I aim to take running records every other week.

C: So in your centers you said the students work collaboratively, but do they ever have activities that they have to do independently?

TEACHER G: They do, they love to color (showing me a worksheet that they cut/paste and color according to letter/sound), but the problem is you have fast finishers and some children that are playing, so I took the coloring for right now.

C: So what kinds of thing are they doing in the literacy centers?

TEACHER G: Over here I have (going to get the activity matching beginning, middle, ending sounds), that is the yellow table. The red table is browsing boxes, the blue table is magnetic letters, then rhyming words.

C: What are they doing with magnetic letters?

TEACHER G: Sight words.

C: They are all doing the same sight words?

TEACHER G: Yes, they have sight words for the week and after they make those they

can make any of the ones we have covered before. I was having them to write them but I want them to be engaged and have fun while they are doing it which is why I changed it. I want them to read the words too, but sometimes they get a little noisy and I want to make sure they are on task. I want them to know the words and they are good at teaching each other.

C: How long are your literacy centers?

TEACHER G: About 12-13 minutes because I need to have enough time with my groups.

C: So they rotate from center to center?

TEACHER G: Yes.

Teacher H

C: How many years have you implemented literacy centers?

TEACHER H: This is my fourth year.

C: That is all in kindergarten?

TEACHER H: Yes

C: How would you define the term literacy centers?

TEACHER H: I would define it as working on reading and writing concepts within independent groups, small group wise

C: Do you like them?

TEACHER H: I love them because you can differentiate them within a work zone. For example, if you have an alphabet work zone that you are working on, the tier 1 students can be working on ABC order, recognizing what letter comes next and your higher ones can be finding words, writing sentences that start with A, start with B, that have a certain word in them. I just like that aspect of them.

C: So you think they are important?

TEACHER H: Yes because not only does it let them know that they are learning something, because they see their progress every day. So they might see they only got A-E, but today I got the whole alphabet and I started writing my own sentences. It gives them a sense of ownership.

C: How do you think literacy centers can be effective at fostering student's reading growth?

TEACHER H: I think it helps with their reading skills because it is a building process. At the beginning of the year you are starting out with letter sounds even in your work zones and recognizing letters and then you are putting that into making a word and then you are making that into making a sentence. That fosters the way you approach reading, starting out with recognizing sounds and words you see and building on that. It is a progression.

C: How do you choose your activities for literacy centers?

TEACHER H: I look for something that is engaging for them, and then I try to find a skill or a concept that they if they are not struggling with it, they still are not 100% sure of. I also do it on reading and writing also. So if a certain group of students need help with one area that I want to make sure they are focused on that area, like writing stories.

C: How do you determine what their needs are?

TEACHER H: A lot of times when I pull them for small group for reading or conference

with them I'll make a notation that we need to be working on this and then I use that for what I need to do.

C: How many centers?

TEACHER H: I have 5.

C: Do they stay on one per day?

TEACHER H: They go to 2 per day. They go to one and then rotate to another one.

C: Do they choose or do you choose?

TEACHER H: Right now I choose.

C: Does each literacy center focus on one reading area or an integration of skills?

TEACHER H: I feel like it is an integration at 3 of the work zones, while the other 2 are more specific at working on sight words. Sight words would be more vocabulary. The ones that does have integration, I use an I Can, starts out with letters , then phonemic awareness with sounding out words, then writing sentences and progressing through that.

C: So the I Cans start out simple and then gets more complex?

TEACHER H: Exactly. It is like that for every work zone. If focuses on where they are. According to their ability level determines how far they get down the I Can. The higher learners usually finish it

C: What do the higher learners do if they finish that?

TEACHER H: They don't run out, because at the end of the work zone is writing sentences and they are never through writing sentences.

C: How would you define the term differentiation instruction?

TEACHER H: Differentiated instruction is where you meet the needs of each student. So one students needs may be complete different from another ones.

C: to go back again and touch on this, what does you lower kids do in the work zones again?

TEACHER H: They are paired with a higher student to help them and they would be working on recognizing letters, letters and letter sounds.

C: That is on the I Can, so every student works on that skill?

TEACHER H: Yes

C: So after the letters and letter sounds what kind of activities come next on the I Can?

TEACHER H: Speaking specifically on one work zone, they are finding words that start with a certain letter, or have that letter in it and they would begin their sentences. They might not be filling up the page with sentences like the higher students, but they are

getting one or two. They make their own sentences. So I they have done their ABCs and have written a apple, b call, c cat, there now doing their sentences, I like the dog because it is blue.

C: Can you explain your other centers?

TEACHER H: I have a listening center where they are recognizing characters, setting, parts of the story, I have an ABC clip center because they are clipping ABCs and writing sentences, one center is playing zap it which is a sight word game. If they pull a stick and they don't know the word, the person beside them can help them. Then I have another sight word work zone where they are looking for magazines finding picture they really like that are non-fiction, which we talk about afterwards. They are looking for sight words in there, or just words that are 3 letters, 4 letters, 5 letters, 6 letters and they have to differentiate, sort them on a piece of paper. And then another work zone is where they are putting together words and then making sentences with them.

C: The center where they do the activity with a magazine, is that every week?

TEACHER H: Yes, every week and they try to read the words to me.

C: Do the low kids find the words in magazines too?

TEACHER H: They try to find the 3 and 4 letter words.

C: What are your feelings on differentiation?

TEACHER H: It is important because if you're not having differentiation in your classroom you are either leaving some students behind and they are not grasping anything or some students are so completely bored that they will act up because they need more to do, the need to be challenged more.

C: Are you students grouped by mixed ability?

TEACHER H: Mixed and they are grouped by who works well each other.

C: Does the higher kids helping the lower kids ever keep them from not getting their work done?

TEACHER H: I usually ask my higher kids to finish first, then help.

C: The lower ones are receptive to help from the higher students?

TEACHER H: Yes, the lower kids can work up to a point and then they get stuck and that is when the higher ones will come in and help.

C: What kind of assessments do you use to determine the ability levels of your students?

TEACHER H: I don't do a lot of formal assessments, mainly it is informal observations and assessments, especially with reading and writing. That really determines where I group them and work specifically on with them. I am looking at what they are able to do

and conferencing with them and talking about something and I'll notice that student A is struggling with sounding out 3 letter words so I need to have this student working on this skill. Or student B is having issues reading fluently through a sentence so that will be something he will need to work on.

C: Do you use the Fountas & Pinnell?

TEACHER H: Yes, I use Fountas & Pinnell 3 times a year to determine what specific reading level they are on.

C: How about to determine if they know letters and sounds?

TEACHER H: I use a form weekly, we go to the computer lab and I use that as my assessment time for sight words, numbers and letters. So I will have a letter sheet and I'll highlight the letter when I bring the student over to me. If they know the name of the letter it gets highlighted in one area, if they know the sound it gets highlighted in another area, and if they know both they get a square around it. I put that in the homework folder so it goes home every week to the parent so the parent can see, that this week you knew 2 letters and you still have 12 more to go. It is kind of communication between myself and the parent. I do that with sight words too.

C: How do you know if students are mastering or not mastering the skills you have in the literacy centers?

TEACHER H: I can see it by glancing around the room. The ones that are focused and working, I know they absolutely know what they are suppose to do. And then I will have those ones that are looking around, they don't really know what they are doing and I can tell they still need instruction on how to go about following the I Can sheet. And typically the ones that have not mastered it are my lower tier students. They are waiting for someone to tell them, hey this is what you are suppose to do.

C: Do they have a product at the end, like a paper that you can check?

TEACHER H: They carry around a literacy journal with the work zone that they go to and then we can look at it at the end of the day to see if they have done their work and making progress.

C: How do you determine if a student is ready to move on to a more advanced skill?

TEACHER H: I kind of let them set their own pace at that because all students want to get to the bottom of the I Can sheet. If they want to try to move forward then I let them, I don't hold them back. Then they realize, I can do this and it is not as hard as I thought it was. It is kind of a self motivator.

C: The students that are still working on letters and sounds do you prompt them to focus on that?

TEACHER H: Yes I do, it will probably take them the whole 20 minutes to get through that, putting the alphabet together. And then some of them will start looking for words that start with letter A. And they know where they can find words. They can find words on any of our alphabet posters and they use the resources very well. It just takes some of them a long time with the letter recognition part. They have to have something in front of them that has the full alphabet on it so they can match it up. And I am doing SST paper work on them because they should know it by now.

C: What happens if they go in the center and they get nothing done?

TEACHER H: Very rarely do they not have nothing done, because they can see what the other students are doing and they can do some aspect of every single work zone.

Teacher I

C: How many years have you implemented literacy centers in your classroom?

TEACHER I: This is my third year doing it but my first year with my own kindergarten class. I did through a long term sub in first grade and also my student teaching.

C: How would you define the term literacy centers?

TEACHER I: Mine are based on the Daily 5, although there are really 6 of them. It is an area where you practice what I have been teaching. So I give a mini lesson and then they are doing it themselves, independently. You're working on your reading, your writing, hitting all those core literacy things that they need to learn.

C: What are your 6 centers?

TEACHER I: There are 2 word works, work on writing, read to self, read to someone, listen to reading. One word work is table work like a game and the other is building words with magnet boards.

C: How many centers do they do a day?

TEACHER I: 2, but technically there is 8 centers counting Margaret and I.

C: Do you like literacy centers, why/why not?

TEACHER I: Yes I do. I feel like you can get so much accomplished. First it gives me a chance to work in a small group setting with my students. And it gives them a chance to have mastery over what they are doing, they have control over their work. It is more student led and sometimes it is neat to listen to their conversations when they are figuring out things.

C: Why are they important:

TEACHER I: Mainly because of what we just talked about really their learning on their own, developing that independent learning, which is needed when they move through the grades in school. Right now each center is 20 minutes so it is 20 minutes you are working on that task and then you move on to the next one. I think a lot of learning happens in that time.

C: How do you think literacy centers can be effective at fostering a student's reading growth?

TEACHER I: First there is guided reading, which is part of literacy centers. That is a huge part of your reading growth, actually learning those reading skills. We are teaching decoding, talking about comprehension. The independent literacy centers there are 3 that are big on reading, like listening to reading. And that is all they are doing, listening to a book and then they are telling me about it. So they have to find words they know in that

book. They are looking through it and saying “Oh I know that word and this word”. Then they listen to it read to them.

C: This is listening?

TEACHER I: Yes, first, they have to find words they know then they listen to it with in mind what they already know. Then there is reading to yourself and they just sit and read, which they are building more and more of. Then there is read to somebody. You might not remember a word but your buddy does, so they can help you and you learn a lot from your friends.

C: In the listening, do they just listen for 20 minutes?

TEACHER I: No, they have to respond.

C: In writing. Verbal?

TEACHER I: It depends, the sheet changes. We do the same one for 2 weeks. My high students are doing beginning, middle, end. My low group are still doing tell me what you liked.

C: They are drawing a picture:

TEACHER I: Yes, a picture and a sentence.

C: Your lower kids are trying to write too?

TEACHER I: Yes, they are.

C: The read to self and someone is only reading, no writing?

TEACHER I: That is correct.

C: Can you explain your word work centers to me?

TEACHER I: The first word work center has games they play. Either word games, matching games, my low ones are still working with letters, like letter matching, matching upper and lower case letters. My 2 higher groups this week are doing sight word matching and when they are done they write in on a whiteboard and write sentences with it. They do one at a time and erase it.

C: How do you know it is done correctly?

TEACHER I: I am watching them.

C: All students do that?

TEACHER I: Yes

TEACHER I: The magnet board this week they are building their words on the boards and they record them and then write a sentence. My higher students write a silly story using as many sight words as they can.

C: The words are sight words?

TEACHER I: Sometimes

C: You switch the words each week?

TEACHER I: Yes

C: How do you decide what activities to put in your literacy centers?

TEACHER I: Depends on what I see the need as. We did a little bit of word families but I felt we were really slacking on sight words, that they weren't learning them as much as I wanted them to.

C: What kind of assessments are you using to determine what the needs are?

TEACHER I: Through our writing in writers workshop, I can see what they can and cannot do, like "I don't know how to spell make". Through guided reading and teacher observation. We have morning work they do as well and it is words on it they have to read and circle the right one, they have to draw a picture to match a word. I can see from what they are doing what their needs are.

C: What are your formal assessments?

TEACHER I: Fountas & Pinnell, checklists for letters/letter sounds and sight words.

C: How do you determine if the students have mastered a skill in the centers?

TEACHER I: Really it is just observation. I watch what they are doing when we are together and when they have gotten it I know they don't need to work on it anymore in literacy centers. They are ready to go on.

C: Your activities integrate the areas of reading?

TEACHER I: Yes

C: How would you define the term differentiated instruction?

TEACHER I: Giving a student what they need. It is not always the same, it is just what they need. I am really working on differentiating my centers and it looks different each week. It is really making sure they have what they need and they are not all on the same level. So this table might need something totally different from another table, my groups have been the same ability level. But now I am letting them choose their own center. So we have had big conversations that although they are in the same center, they may not be doing the same work.

C: Do your higher kids help the lower ones?

TEACHER I: I was worried about that. But they are doing really well. I have seen a lot of help from each other especially with the buddy reading. I was afraid my high ones would

just feel like they just had to read it but that hasn't happened, they are really helping each other. Like stretching out a word for a friend.

C: When they are reading to themselves, do they have leveled readers to read?

TEACHER I: I have an "I pick" sign that tells them how to choose the right book for them. When they read by themselves they need to read their guided reading book first then they can move on and choose based on their interest, but they still need to look at the book and decide if they can understand it, if it is a good book for them.

C: What do you think about differentiation?

TEACHER I: I think it is a lot of work to start with but it works a lot better in the end. I had some students that didn't even know letters when they came and then I had one that was reading on a level J, so differentiation is very important to meet their needs. I think my very high one is being challenged but at the same time he still needs some of the basics that he has kind of skipped over. I am much tougher on him in areas like spelling, because I know he can spell the words. At the end of the center their work goes in their folder on the still working or completed side and I check it. If they are still working on it they stay in at recess to complete it, if they have completed it I give them a happy face.

C: How again do you use your formal assessments?

TEACHER I: I use them to find out exactly where my students are so I know what they need in literacy centers. If they have gone up a reading level then I am going to move them up a level in centers. I use them as a basis for what they need.

Teacher J

C: How many years have you implemented literacy centers in your classroom?

TEACHER J: Well, I've been a paraprofessional for 6 years before teaching so I just did whatever the teacher asked me to do so 6 years experience.

C: So when you were a para you did have literacy centers?

TEACHER J: We had centers and we rotated but most of the time the teachers did the same thing for the entire class.

C: This was pre-k?

TEACHER J: This was kindergarten. She did mostly large group work. Based on ability level we would change things around.

C: Then they would go in small groups, literacy centers?

TEACHER J: She would do the small reading groups. Then I would oversee everyone else. The ones I was overseeing were all doing the same thing.

C: How would you define the term literacy center?

TEACHER J: For me it is helping kids learn, learn to read and write, according to their ability.

C: What are your thoughts on literacy center implementation?

TEACHER J: I like implementing them because it reaches out to everybody's individual needs. So you have to cater to them because everybody comes in at different levels. Some, like the high fliers are already reading and some who do not have any background knowledge, it helps them learn letter sounds, learn phonics, and learn words.

C: Do you think they're important?

TEACHER J: Yes it is, because it reaches their needs.

C: Explain how literacy centers can be effective at fostering student's reading growth?

TEACHER J: The ones who did not have an English background started off with Elkion Boxes and we used the thing that you slide the letters through to get sounds (the recorder thing), so they used that for the first few weeks of school in August, then they progressed once they learned the sounds to move into the Elkion Boxes, where there is a picture and they are putting it together with the sounds. Teaching them how to break it into phonemes.

C: Did you just use that for you English language learners or all your students?

TEACHER J: I used it for the regular kids, some who were really low, they could speak but they didn't know how to read and when we started in August everybody said they didn't know how to read, now they all are reading.

C: So they all used that?

TEACHER J: They all used that.

C: They have now progressed to doing what?

TEACHER J: Now we are into writing. So if I give them a topic they are now writing beginning, middle, end stories.

C: Can you describe how you choose your activities for literacy centers?

TEACHER J: It depends upon the theme, like I get what we are teaching this nine weeks, I go by the lesson plans we are suppose to be teaching, then I tweak it based on what my class requires. So I may not always do what is planned out for us. I look at what my kids need, some kids need support and so accordingly I change it. I may realize they did not understand something from the previous lesson so I go back and teach. Like this week it was day and night, I hadn't started that because I wanted to start from today. Last week I went back and discussed what we did before the winter break.

C: So your literacy centers are based on the Common Core units?

TEACHER J: Some on Common Core, some on the IB unit, it depends on what my students need.

C: So how do you decide what literacy center activities to use?

TEACHER J: I do the Daily 5.

C: So with the Daily 5, does that cover all the 5 areas of reading?

TEACHER J: During my word work I cover phonemic awareness and fluency. I also cover all 5 in literacy centers, then when they come to me I cover vocabulary. We discuss the vocabulary they will be learning in the unit.

C: Do they work with that vocabulary in a center?

TEACHER J: They work with me and then when they know the vocabulary they create sentences out of that vocabulary.

C: Do you have one center for each area or does the centers integrate the 5 areas of literacy?

TEACHER J: It depends. They do the work in one center, like phonemic awareness, then rotate to the next center the next day. They stay in one center each day. In Daily 5 you can change them around but I don't think they get enough out of that time span.

C: What do you do if they don't finish their work?

TEACHER J: They make it up, either in the morning when they come in or do it in the afternoon.

C: For the children that complete their work quickly, do they have something else to do?

TEACHER J: I have something else for them, I have some games that they can play or I have other writing work that they can do.

C: How would you define the term differentiated instruction?

TEACHER J: To me differentiated instruction is catering to every child's needs. So it

depends upon what is good for me might not be good for you. So they might say it not fair but I think it is fair to everybody.

C: Does differentiated occur in your literacy centers?

TEACHER J: It does. For example, if I have an ESOL kid that does not know how to sound out I might, I initially started off with a yellow marker writing down the sentence and they would trace it and now they have a picture and I still guide them and help them write the words. I have on the table a word wall and I guide them how to find the word from the word wall. If you were already literate, you know your sight words and sounds, then you have to sound it out and do it, I don't give them as much help. I don't support them as much.

C: And your higher kids you expect more out of them?

TEACHER J: Exactly, for example I have letters and pictures that go under each letter. For the ESOL kids they just put the pictures. Yet with the other kids that can read and know their words, I try to have them sound out and write the whole word underneath each picture. So that is an added step to their work.

C: What are your feelings on differentiation?

TEACHER J: I think it is important and a lot of work. You have to plan a lot. But it does help meet their needs.

C: Can you describe how you group your students in literacy centers?

TEACHER J: I vary it all the time. Some I do by reading level, some depending upon what we are doing, sometime I find a higher ESOL student, like I have a couple of students in my class that are ESOL but not being served because they are high and I pair them with another student who is a lower level ESOL so they can speak in Spanish. I have 2 Indian children that feel comfortable with each other so I pair them together so they can help each other.

C: Do the kids always stay together in the group?

TEACHER J: No , I vary it. So different children are helping each other. It depends on the activity.

C: Do you use assessments to determine the ability levels of your students?

TEACHER J: I use running records, profile sheets. I look at how the kids are doing,

C: How do you know they are mastering skills?

TEACHER J: By whatever proof they can show me in class. So if they are writing I look to see if they are sounding out words, punctuation, capital letters, I know they are progressing in the right direction.

C: In your centers, do students work independently, collaboratively, or both?

TEACHER J: I do both depending upon what we are doing. The writing is their own writing sometimes and sometimes they write stories collaboratively or compare 2 books.

Teacher K

C: How many years have you implemented literacy centers in your classroom?

TEACHER K: 7 years, with third grade and kindergarten. If you are not in a reading group then you were in a literacy center.

C: how many years in kindergarten?

TEACHER K: Counting this year, 4.

C: How would you define the term literacy centers?

TEACHER K: Working on reading, writing, word work, skills, in groups.

C: What are your thoughts on literacy center implementation?

TEACHER K: I like implementing them especially in kindergarten, well third grade as well. I believe it is necessary in order to run effective reading groups. It is very hard and it takes a lot of time but I think it works well.

C: Describe how literacy centers can be effective at fostering student's reading growth.

TEACHER K: Literacy centers allow them to work on more than just reading, they can work on writing, word work, rhyming, different activities that help their reading. So in the reading group you only have about 10-15 minutes then the centers allow for another 15-30 minutes to work on different reading skills.

C: How many reading groups do you pull a day?

TEACHER K: I pull 2 and my para pulls 2. One group does not meet with us each day.

C: How do you choose your activities for your literacy centers?

TEACHER K: It is based on the Daily 5. Each center is centered around that. There is always read to self, read to someone, and then they do word work which changes whether we are talking about opposites, sequencing, letters/sounds, writing, and then listen to reading.

C: Is the word work based on the Daily 5?

TEACHER K: It is based on what we are working on in the room and it is differentiated so my ESOL students are still working on letter recognition, capital/lower case letters, medium kids are doing letter sounds matching pictures to letters, and higher kids are working on vocabulary words and writing sentences with vocabulary words.

C: How are your other centers differentiated?

TEACHER K: read to someone is differentiated because they usually go by their group level. The blue group is my highest reading level so when they read to someone they read a level E or F book, the green group is my lowest group and they read a level A book to

their partner. In the listen to reading center they all do the same book. Work on writing is differentiated depending on how much help they get, some of them still get sentence starters and others are able to journal by themselves.

C: So the centers are integrated with phonics, phonemic awareness and such?

TEACHER K: yes

C: How do you define the term differentiated instruction?

TEACHER K: It is almost like individual instruction, so it helps students learn on their level.

C: What are your feelings on differentiation?

TEACHER K: It is necessary, but it is difficult and time consuming. It is necessary in centers because otherwise they would just get lost and not be able to do the work.

C: How do you group your students?

TEACHER K: For now they have been grouped on their reading level. We have 5 groups: blue green, yellow, red, and orange and that is based on their reading level. They are on a schedule based on which 5 they go to each day. Now starting next week they're going to get to choose which of the 5 they go to each day to add a little more independence.

C: So these groups are homogenous?

TEACHER K: Yes, similar ability levels. When they start choosing it could be varying ability levels and we are going to have to work out how to make this work. We will see how it goes next week. It means stepping out the box.

C: Is there some particular reason you decided to change?

TEACHER K: The other teachers that do Daily 5 let the chose. I didn't think they were ready for that at the beginning of the year but now being January I think they can try to do it.

C: So if you have varying ability levels in the group do you think that could work to your advantage?

TEACHER K: I think it is about them being aware of their level and knowing what they can do. We have tubs of their work and I am going to label their tubs with the color. Some of my higher students are lazy and they would rather do the easy work. And they always have plenty to do. Each group is only in a center for 12 minutes, except the group we don't meet with and they go to 2 different centers that day. We have 2 sessions, I do a mini lesson and then first round of small groups, then back to the carpet and I do another mini lesson and second round of small groups. It rotates.

C: why do you break it up and do a mini-lesson in between?

TEACHER K: That is how Daily 5 works. There are different reading mini lessons that I do. This week we are talking about questions, so we read a book and then we talk about the questions we can ask about the story.

C: How long is the mini lesson usually?

TEACHER K: 10 minutes. I start when we come back from lunch. So I first start with a book, and that might last 10-15 minutes, then they go to Daily 5 round 1, then we come back and revisit the same book talking about a lesson.

C: When they go to centers, is the work connected with the mini lesson or the skills they need to be working on?

TEACHER K: It depends. Sometimes I try to design the mini lesson, this goes along with Daily 5 also, its CAFE, comprehension lesson, accuracy lesson, fluency lesson, expand vocabulary lesson. Sometimes the comprehension lesson might go along with journaling and how you can write about a text. So sometimes the lesson does go along with the centers. Like if the mini lesson is on sight words or rhyming words, then the word work may be on those skills, or writing center too.

C: What assessments do you use to determine the ability levels of your students?

TEACHER K: GKIDS, report cards rubrics, Fountas & Pinnell.

C: How do you use those assessments?

TEACHER K: We use Fountas & Pinnell frequently. On Fridays I try to assess some students reading levels. So we do running records on different students each Friday. Once a student can demonstrate they can read 3 books at a certain level, through running records based on books from the book room, then we assess them using Fountas & Pinnell. Then I change reading groups as students move up.

C: Can you explain more about the read to someone center?

TEACHER K: They sit together and then they read the story together and fill out a piece of paper together with name of book, they draw a picture of the story, then they find the sight words.

C: Is there any other center where they might work collaboratively?

TEACHER K: In word work they do work together. There are different games that they can play. In journaling they end up working together, talking about their work. The only really independent one I read to self. They have their own book box and they can get some books from the shelf. In their book box they also have a poetry journal that they put their poems in and they read those sometimes.

Appendix F: Observation Data—Round 1

Place: Teacher A's Classroom

Date/Time: 1/28/14, 10:00-10:45 a.m.

Teacher A was giving directions on a new task to the students when I entered. Students then broke into five independent pairs, one teacher and one para led group. The teacher was conducting a guided reading group, occasionally checking in on the independent pairings. The para was leading a group in completing an American Symbols booklet. Teacher A selected the centers and groupings were heterogeneous.

The independent pairings were completing the task of working with a partner to research and find/write three important facts relating to the American flag. A higher student was paired with a lower student for support as needed. A variety of books was available as resources. Partners were to talk and decide what facts to write and the facts were to be written in their own words.

Partners were not always supporting each other and some were not writing the same information. Varying ability levels was evident as some students wrote complete sentences and other wrote words and phrases. Two partner groups worked well together and supported each other. Five students were sounding out words and reading the informational text while eight students were sounding out words while writing. Two students demonstrated word knowledge and wrote words correctly without sounding out. Five students could not read the informational text but were able to point to and identify a variety of sight words, such as: the, can, is. Six students were able to write their sight words correctly. Two students were reading the informational text to their partners. Three students looked at their partners writing and shared theirs. They supported their partners sounding out words as needed. *Vocabulary/sight words, phonics, comprehension*

Place: Teacher B's Classroom

Date/Time: 2/6/14, 12:45-1:30 P.M.

Upon entering teacher B's classroom, students had just become engaged in literacy centers. Teacher B was working with a small guided reading group, the paraprofessional was at lunch duty, and groups of students were working in various literacy centers. When para returned from lunch duty, she circulated around the room and assessed students using a checklist on their sight word knowledge. Teacher B checked the paperwork from students at the completion of literacy centers. All students work was accepted and placed in individual folders. Centers were selected by students and groups were heterogeneous.

Group one consisted of four students playing Zingo. This game consisted of sight word cards and corresponding boards. Students took turns turning over cards and finding the match on their board (similar to a Bingo game). Two students were reading the words as they turned the cards over, while the other two did not. There is no evidence of collaboration within this center. The students are having a difficult time taking turns and kept pushing the table back and forth into each other. There is no redirection by the teacher. When para enters room from lunch duty, 25 minutes into centers, she addresses the group's misbehavior, realigns the table properly, and instructs them to put their heads down, there is no more learning in this center. *I find out later the two students not reading are the lower learners. The higher students are supposed to be helping the lower ones. It appears to be too many students for one game, too difficult waiting for their turn. Vocabulary/sight words, fluency*

One student is engaged in the computer, playing Starfall (*independent*). *Teacher B commented that he is her problem child and is allowed to be on Starfall during literacy centers because he enjoys playing it and does not bother the other children.* The child was highly engaged and called me over several times to show me his letter and sound matching skills (*Phonics*). He also requested help on filling in the beginning and ending letters for three and four letter words. Examples: Picture of a sun, *_ u _*. Picture of two feet, *_ e e _*. Letter to choose from were available at the bottom of the screen. *This child had a difficult time completing the second task just mentioned independently. The game would not let him put the incorrect letter in place, so eventually he was able to choose the correct letter. Phonics*

One student was at the listening center. He was listening to NAME OF STORY HERE and then completed a reader response paper as follows:

Title of story -

2 main characters - My Parents didn't say much. They l

What was the problem – I look iks a sgh DilAg w mo He Disa D DywTh Me. At the

completion of centers, teacher B inquired what was written and student said, “I like that they did a fight and then they got together”. *Comprehension, phonics, vocabulary/sight words*

Group two consisted of three students highlighting sight words in a story, *The Statue of Liberty*. One student used the word wall as a reference for finding sight words. The other two students are copying the first student, highlighting what he does. After words are highlighted, students turned the paper over and drew a detailed picture of the Statue of Liberty. *Vocabulary/sight words* One child keeps asking group one to stop pushing their table as it keeps bumping into his. Group two tries to stay on task, but group one’s table shoving is disruptive. Teacher B does not redirect students. Students are able to complete the task when para returns and then they get their book boxes. Two students read to each other while the third read independently. The book boxes have leveled readers. *If higher learners in this group, why is there no writing of sentences? All students are doing the same thing; even though it is evident that one student is higher. Teacher B explains afterwards that students do not write in this center and the book boxes are books read previously and are based on each students reading level. Vocabulary/sight words, fluency*

Group three consists of three students with a task to write facts about and illustrate an American symbol. A variety of informational texts are available for referencing. One student writes two sentences about the Statue of Liberty, copying text from a book with correct spacing and punctuation. The second student copies one sentence from a book about the Liberty Bell, using correct punctuation but no spacing. The third student is off task, getting up and down to switch books. Finally she settled on a book about the American Flag and by the end of literacy centers she wrote “ca” on her paper, no illustration. *It is obvious there are a variety of academic levels here. Students seem to be working on their level, although the student off task may have gotten more done if she was provided with or had to choose a text to use prior to the start of centers. Comprehension, vocabulary/sight words, phonics*

Two students were in group four. These two students were provided with pictures belonging to the –at family and they had to cut out letters and make the CVC words to match. The words consisted of cat, rat, mat. One student completed the task successfully, while the other copied her paper. They then turned the paper to the back to write sentences. Examples:

1- Koie eyooe ayoe kea I the toyolyk I ftASP.

2- I lik my mom we go play William look my dade is gne to me to sou. I the sun. *I was unsure if they were to write sentences using the word family words or sight words. The para told me the task was to write using sight words. If they wrote sentences using the word family words, would it make a deeper connection? It is clear student A is a lower*

student based on her need for support and sentence construction. Phonics, phonemic awareness, vocabulary/sight words

Three students are reading independently. One of these students is engaged with one text the entire center block, he holds the book upside down and pretends to read. The second student is observed reading a level B reader fluently and correctly. The third student plays with his book box, pushing it around the floor and never selects a book to read. No redirection by the teacher or para. *Fluency, vocabulary/sight words, phonics*

Two students are reading to each other. One student has a level A reader (simple text: Can fish, Can dog, etc.) and is pretend reading by looking at the picture (e.g. The fish can swim in the water, The dog likes to bark). After “reading” 3 pages like this, the other student corrects her on each page and the student echo reads. The corrector then reads a level C reader to her partner fluently and correctly. It is observed her sounding out the word cotton. There is no evidence of tracking print by either student. *I am unsure if the higher student was actually looking at the words from her text, it appears she was looking more at the pictures and reading from memory. It is evident however that she can read by her corrections to her partner. Fluency, phonics, vocabulary/sight words*

Place: Teacher C's room

Date/Time: 2/18/14, 9:45-10:35

Upon entering teacher C's room, students were engaged in whole group. Teacher C was leading the students in clapping and spelling sight words, then reviewed the work that groups of students would be engaged in during literacy centers. Teacher C pulled three reading groups, assessing sight words and then conducting a guided reading lesson during literacy centers, her para worked with a group playing a sight word identification game. Students were very loud and generally off task during literacy centers. There were numerous interruptions from the students on what and how to do tasks. Students were traveling around the classroom and kept getting up to trade in pencils. There was no redirection by the teacher. Student work was placed in individual folders at the completion of literacy centers to be checked at the end of the day. Centers are teacher selected and groups are homogeneous.

Group one consisted of students completing an American symbol word search. They were to write sight words on the back when word search was completed. Six students were engaged in this center. Four students completed the word search and started writing sight words on the back. Collaboration in completing the word search was evident. Students were using the word wall as a resource. Examples:

1. at can 2. me red 3. ha af 4. on one see to you

Good collaboration, Vocabulary/sight words

Group two consisted of six students completing a syllables worksheet. They were to write sentences on the back using sight words when finished. Valentine theme pictures were provided and the students had to write how many syllables in each. Examples: mailbox, valentine, heart. Three students were assisting each other when there was a question relating to the number of syllables. One student kept getting up and down to ask the teacher. Examples of sentences:

1. I cant run no mor said mama

2. My tchrt is red and white

3. I crr do LBBlo

One student wrote sight words on the back: you it do to so

Why is the one student not seeking assistance from his peer? Phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary/sight words

Group three had two Spanish speaking students playing a letter/picture match game. The game consisted of hearts cut in half, with capital/lowercase letters on one side and a picture on the other. The students were working collaboratively, but they were matching many letters/pictures incorrectly. Examples were:

Bb-cat, Kk-octopus, Pp-x-ray, Nn-volcano. After playing this way for a while, the students started lining up the hearts and counting them. After that they began playing with the math calendar.

It is obvious these students do not know letters and sounds. There is no student accountability in this center. Would have been better to have paired a high with a low student for assistance? Phonics

Group four had five students completing a tr configuration worksheet, with a word search on the back. The configuration task required students to fit tr words within boxes, then draw a picture to match. One student was copying the students work beside her (*collaboration*). Another student drew on this folder for 15 minutes before getting started. He did not complete the tasks at the end of centers. Four students completed the tasks and got books from a shelf. These were not leveled. Two students were pretend reading independently, while the other two students looked at and discussed the pictures. *Leveled readers would have built fluency. After the observation I was told the one student that was drawing is smart but very rarely completes his work. Phonics, vocabulary/sight words, comprehension*

Group five was engaged in technology. Two students were collaboratively working on the computer. Their task consisted of the computer saying a letter sound and them finding and clicking on that letter. They took turns and one student was telling the other what letter to click because he was struggling at times. Three students took turns playing a sight word game on the Smart Board. A sight word was spoken for them and they had to take the given mixed up letters and put the letters in the correct order to spell the word. Example: the word red was spoken, students were given d,e,r. They then drug each letter to put in correct order and spell the word. *The Smart Board was very loud and this seemed to cause the other children in the room to get louder as well. Phonics, vocabulary/sight words*

Place: Teacher D's Classroom

Date/Time: 1/28/14, 1:00 – 1:45

Upon entering teacher D's classroom, students were engaged in whole group. Teacher D was giving directions for the literacy centers, with an emphasis on a new activity. Students were then dispersed to their centers. Teacher D and her paraprofessional each met with a group of students. Differentiation occurred in these two centers with each group reading their leveled reader in a guided reading group. Each student read their leveled book to the para or teacher, documentation was recorded. These groups then worked on other skills. Two groups were independent. Both groups were doing the same work: Identifying words that began with the letter K (sorting the appropriate pictures onto a kangaroo picture) and completing a sight word worksheet (given 9 sight words to cut out, write onto another piece of paper, then staple the cut out words into a booklet) (*sight words*). There was no redirection for students off task. Student work was put in individual folders at the completion of literacy centers. Teacher selected centers, groups were homogeneous. *I was told afterwards that student work is checked by the para before recess. Students that do not complete their work stay inside at recess with the para and are expected to complete all tasks. It should be noted that this was a snow day and the students were very excited that day.*

Group one consisted of six students. This group was very off task the entire literacy center block. One student was attempting to cut his hair, another student told him to stop. The prior student then proceeded to color his kangaroo picture (during direction time, told by teacher to do that last). He did not complete any other task. The other five students were talking, playing with scissors, and attempting to tie each other shoes. At the completion of center time three of these five students had completed the kangaroo worksheet and were starting the sight word tasks, the other two started but did not complete the kangaroo paper. Four of these students interrupted teacher D to ask for directions again. *Vocabulary/sight words, phonics*

Group two consisted of six students. One student spent 10 minutes cutting his eraser with scissors before getting started on his work. He began his work but kept blurting out that he didn't know what to do with the sight word assignment. He proceeded to glue them together with large amounts of glue. The other five completed all the work. Two of these students were reading the sight words to each other. One student then underlined sight words and circled K words in a My Kk Book. *This was a task from the previous day.* Two students started reading books collaboratively from their book boxes. These were level C readers. The other three students that completed their tasks spent the remaining time talking with each other. *Vocabulary/sight words, phonics, fluency*

Place: Teacher E's Classroom

Date/Time: 2/5/14, 9:45-10:15

Upon entering teacher E's classroom students were transitioning into literacy centers. Teacher E pulled two reading groups while the para met with one group and assisted in completing an American flag art project. Students were very on task and completed assignments. The lowest English language learners are usually supported during this time by the ESOL teacher, but due to testing by this teacher, these students are working independently. Teacher E and para checked student's work at the completion of literacy centers. Student work was placed in individual folders. Teacher selected centers, groups were homogeneous.

Center one consisted of six students completing math activities. This included writing missing numbers on a worksheet, writing numbers, 1-30, on the back, and then rolling a 10 sided dice and tracing the matching number. This group was pulled for guided reading half of the time. *Unsure why a math center is integrated within literacy centers*

Center two consisted of six students tracing and writing 20 given sight words on a paper. Four students were pulled for guided reading, but returned to group and completed tasks. Two students trying to read words while writing, but having difficulty, asked another student for help throughout. The higher student assisted as needed. Two students were reading the words as writing and two students were saying the letters as writing. They then proceeded to write two sentences on the back. Most students exhibited sounding out individual words and reading of complete sentences during the writing. Examples of sentences:

1- Wrdz has the ledrz (Words has the letters)

2- I see my sirt (I see my shirt)

3- A sey is big, A is big

4- I like to go to skuol, I like to go to the parek (I like to go to school, I like to go to the park)

5- I like to see a kit, I like to rit sit wer (I like to see a kite, I like to write sight words)

6- I lik to see my tech, I like sol (I like to see my teacher, I like school).

After writing sentences, the two students not involved in guided reading retrieved a book from the book shelf to read collaboratively. They were pretend reading and/or talking about the text. These books were not leveled. *Leveled readers are in book boxes but not used during literacy centers. Teacher said they are read during snack time instead.*

Vocabulary/sight words, phonics

Center three consisted of five students led by the para in the art creation.

Center four had six students. These students were labeling American symbols, using a model provided. Afterwards, students turned the paper over and wrote 1-3 sentences about the symbols. One student reminded others what to do as needed. After writing sentences, all students were reading.

Examples of sentences:

- 1- The Statue of Liberty is green. The Bald Eagle can fly. The American Flag wigs.
- 2- The Bald Eagle can fly. The American Flag have 50 strips. The Statue of Liberty.
- 3- The Bald Eagle can fly.
- 4- The Bald Eagle is a Bird and col.
- 5- The Bald Eagle can fiy.
- 6- The Statue of Liberty is green. The American Flag pusen are cuire.

Students then played games, including ABC order, ABC puzzles, rhyming picture match.

Vocabulary/sight words, phonics, fluency, phonemic awareness

Place: Teacher F's Classroom

Date/Time: 2/7/14, 9:40-10:30

Teacher F was engaged in a whole group mini lesson when I entered her classroom. Students were instructed of their centers for first round. Teacher conducted two running records and led a guided reading group during literacy centers. Para was in the media center with the eight higher students that participate in Accelerated Reader. At the completion of centers, teacher F told students to put work in their folders to be checked by para when she returned. Teacher pulled students into a whole group and selected students shared what they did in their centers. There were times the groups got loud and off task, but there was no redirection by the teacher. Student selected centers, groups were heterogeneous.

Group one played a variety of games. These games included:

Words that tell where – positional words (pics of a frog up, down, on, under, etc. in a variety of four pictures, sort to corresponding positional word board. This was self-checking, when four picture for each positional word sorted correctly, a picture of a frog would be created).

Read the color – color words (read the color word on a paint can and match the corresponding paintbrush).

Where does it belong – matching words by word family.

Make a story – put given sentences in order to make a story.

Find the pairs – visual discrimination between letters and words. Rhyming picture match.

Round one consisted of three students. Two students played read the color together, taking turns reading the color words. One student played find the pairs. All three students were engaged and successful. Round two had five students in the center. Two played where does it belong and two played read the color. All of these students were successful and on task. One boy played words that tell independently. He did not look at the position of the frog in each picture, rather he turned the cards over to the self-checking side and made the pictures of the frog. One of the other students came over to him and told him he was doing it wrong, but he replied he was not and kept on. *Vocabulary/sight words, phonics, comprehension, phonemic awareness*

Group two, round one had three students drawing a picture and writing (free choice) in their journals (One boy told me he had to write two sentences while the AR people had to write a page full). One student was quickly on task, reading while writing and using the word wall as a reference. Her writing:

Litt owl was lastin the forrel. And was soured squirrel helpeld ctel owl look for his mom trap helped heim fin his mom

The other two students were drawing and discussing their pictures. One student never engaged in writing, the other wrote: I like to play

Round two had three students as well. All students were reading as writing and sounding out words.

Examples of writing:

- 1- I can see my mome at homo becus I love hur eve deeu. (every day)
- 2- I haf a sar. (I have a sister) I like my sar.
- 3- I like my mom (All of her writings were I like my mom, I love my mom, I like my dad, I love my dad) *Vocabulary/sight words, phonics*

In group three, students were using wipe-off books to write letters, numbers, match rhyming pictures, and complete ABC order (dot to dot). Three students were in the first round and one student was in the second round. *Phonics, phonemic awareness*

Group four was the computer center. Two students utilized this center round one and two the second round. Both pairs listened to a story and supplied answers to questions based on the text. Afterwards, the pairs matched words to pictures, sounding out the words together. *Good collaboration. Comprehension, vocabulary/sight words, phonics*

Group five was read to someone or read to self. All students had book bags with leveled readers in it. Two pairs read to each other in each round. Both groups worked well together. The first pair was reading a level B, trying to help each other, sounding out words, but had trouble with medial vowel sounds. Fluency was hindered because of the many words trying to be sounded out. The second pair did better. They were reading a level C. They were each reading a page and exhibited fluent reading. They also talked about it afterwards, discussing what they liked. For read to self, round one, two students were tracking print. One student was reading a level D book fluently while the other read a level B and had to stop to sound out some words, having trouble with vowels. After reading his book the fluent reader wrote: I know the bugt haf swrds it is the and play. This student used the book as a resource. The other student did not write. During the second round, there was two students, one fluently reading a level C and one pretend reading a level A. The level C reader wrote: that is my favat budr is Sean Is favt sierr Saniya and Sam. The other student did not write. *After observation teacher mentioned that the students not writing were lower and did not have to respond to text. Could students have worked collaboratively in their writing? Fluency, comprehension, phonics, vocabulary/sight words*

Place: Teacher G's Classroom

Date/Time: 2/6/14, 10:00-10:40

Students were engaged in literacy centers when I entered the room. There were two rounds of centers. The teacher pulled a guided reading group during each rotation and the para worked with a small group on writing –at word family words on dry erase boards. The classroom was very loud and most students in independent centers were off task for large amounts of time. The teacher tried to redirect them and asked several students to move their clips down (behavior management system). None of the students changed their behavior even when redirected. Students were instructed to put work in their folders. Some work was left on the floor. Teacher selects centers and groups are heterogeneous.

Group one was completing a short and long o picture sort. Pictures were mop, fox, log, frog, soap, stove, smoke, coat. A model for completed work had been provided. All students looked at the model and cut and pasted their pictures correctly, however when asked if they knew how the pictures were sorted, none could tell me. Six students were completing the task in round one and two. One student in round two was playing with his scissors and asked to leave the center and sit on the floor. He did not complete any work during this time. *A model is good for low students, but unsure if all these students are low. There seemed to be no understanding of the goal of the task. Phonemic awareness*

Group two was writing sight words on lined paper. These were the sight words posted for the week: play, out, some, who. They wrote each word eight times on both sides and were then to write two sentences. Both rounds had five students. One student completed words and wrote I am playing outside. Another student wrote see on out who. Another student asked if he could write a sentence and the teacher told him no. The other two did not get to or ask about writing sentence. In round two, three students completed their words and started sentences. One student in the group read the words while writing the sight words and was reading the words in a sentence as writing. His sentence was: it is a sun duy. The other two students talked and decided to write "I see you" two times on their paper. The other two students in this center were practicing writing the letter Pp. *Teacher G came over to me and told me that one of the students was new and the other was very low and they both needed to continue to work on letters. Vocabulary/sight words, phonics*

Group three was reading on the floor. Each round had five students. In round one, two students paired up to read together. They shared one book (level C reader) and took turns reading it to each other. The first student read the book fluently; the second student had a lot of difficulty and received support from her partner. The other three students were reading books independently. One student was reading a level B text correctly, while the other two were pretend reading. Round two had two pairs reading together and one student reading independently. One pair was reading a level B text, one girl could read correctly and fluently, the other choral read after the first one read each page. The other

pair was reading a level D together. One girl was sounding out words she did not know and used picture cues. The other one could not read it and had to be told by her partner every word. The child reading alone looked at the pictures and was pretend reading.

Example: A picture of a red flower on page with the text, A red flower. The child said this is a pretty flower. There was no evidence of any students tracking print. *Teacher G said these texts are read prior in guided reading groups. Fluency, comprehension, phonics, vocabulary/sight words*

Place: Teacher H's Classroom

Date/Time: 2/4/13, 10:00-10:45

Upon entering teacher H's classroom, the students were in whole group. Teacher H was reminding the students of the literacy center rules. During literacy center block, teacher H pulled individual students to complete running records and then pulled a reading group. The para pulled individual students and worked one-on-one with these students on reading. Students rotated after 20 minutes to another center. Student work was placed in individual folders but not checked at the completion of literacy centers. Teacher selected centers, groups were heterogeneous. *Teacher H checks folders at the end of the day, before recess. Students stay in with para to complete work if not finished.*

Center one, first rotation: three students in center. Students playing Zap It game. Sight words that have been learned are written on craft sticks and placed in a can with some Zap It sticks. Students take turns pulling out a stick, reading the word if a sight word, and if a Zap It stick, everyone puts the sticks back in. Students played well together. One student was having a difficult time reading some words and the other students would help him.

Second rotation: Four students in center. This group had some trouble taking turns. The para redirected them three times. Two students had difficulty reading and received help from the other two. *Good collaboration both rounds. Vocabulary/sight words, fluency*

Center two, first rotation consisted of four students making words. Sight words were supplied, students picked a word, built it on a board using magnetic letters (1 tray of magnetic letters for group), then wrote the word in their notebook. Students had to build and write five sight words each. Students were reading the words and spelling them as they made them. Two students progressed to writing sentences and were phonetically sounding out words.

Second rotation: Three students, at the completion of time, one student had progressed to writing sentences, one was writing words, and one had not completed anything. *This student was dancing around the entire time. Vocabulary/sight words, phonics*

Center three, first rotation consisted of four students finding words in magazines that had 3, 4, 5, and 6 letters. One student was redirecting the others when she observed them just looking through the magazine and not completing the writing task. All students were still working on this task at the completion of the first round.

Second rotation: Three students, one pretend reading but not completing the writing task, one writing letters from the magazine, but they are the incorrect number of letters (did not fit in box), one finished work after 10 minutes and just sat the remaining 10 minutes. *Vocabulary/sight words*

Center four, first rotation consisted of three students listening to a book in the listening center. Students seemed to be following along with the tape. After the completion of the tape, students were to draw a picture of their favorite part and write about it. All students were drawing the picture at the completion of the first round.

Second Round: Four students, same as above. *Could students, especially higher, written and then illustrated? Vocabulary/sight words, fluency, comprehension*

Center five, first rotation consisted of four students clipping ABCs on a clothes hanger, writing the ABCs in order, writing a word for each letter, then writing a sentence for each word. One student was struggling putting the clips in order. He went to teacher and para numerous times for confirmation of task. Teacher redirected him twice to an ABC chart for support. He got A-F completed by the end of first round. Two of the students were writing letters and one student had started sentences by the end. *I noted this student skipped the first two steps, I was told later that he is a high learner and does not need ABC order practice, thus he is allowed to go to writing words and sentences.*

Second round: Five students were completing task. All five were writing words at the completion. *Some of these students also seemed to move quickly, but had to complete all tasks. Phonics, vocabulary/sight words*

Place: Teacher I's Classroom

Date/Time: 2/19/14, 9:45-10:30

Upon entering teacher I's classroom, the students were in whole group receiving directions on completing center tasks. Students rotated through 2 rounds of centers. Center 1, 3, and 4 had folders labeled Do 1st and Do 2nd. Round one had students more on tasks and a quieter environment than round two. Teacher I met with four reading groups, each student read their book independently to her while others read their book quietly to self. The para was out the day of the observation and a sub was playing a sight word concentration game with two groups. At the end of center time, teacher I checked some work and asked others to put in their individual folders to be checked at the end of the day.

In center one, students were given a Valentine Village Magnify and Find paper, in which tiny sight words were embedded within the picture. Students used a magnifying glass to find the sight words, then wrote ten sight words on a recording sheet. The second task was to stamp the beginning sound. Students were given a picture and the word, minus the beginning sound. Students determined the beginning sound and used stamps to supply it. Examples: _kates (picture of skates), _enguin (picture of a penguin), _nowman (picture of a snowman), _itten (picture of mittens), _ug (picture of a mug). Round one had two students in this center working collaboratively. They successfully completed the first task, reading each word as they wrote it, but struggled with the second one. They put a c instead of a m for mug (students were saying cup), a g for m in mittens (they said gloves), and an e for t in tree. In the second round, three students visited the center. One student was reiterating the directions for completing the first task to the others in her group. Two students were reading the words as writing. When they got to the stamp a letter activity, they also struggled with two words, stamping k for c in mug and g for m in mittens. The other student did not seem to understand the first task. Instead of writing the sight words, she wrote each word from the title. She did not get to the second task. *It appears the students did not understand what the pictures were. For the most part, they put down the correct beginning sound for what they thought the picture was. No evidence of looking at the letters supplied to figure out the word. Students could have sounded out some of the easier words after supplying the beginning letter and understood what they had supplied was incorrect. Vocabulary/sight words, phonics*

In center two round one, four students were engaged in read to self or read to someone. Students were getting books from a shelf, these books were not leveled readers. Two students were paired up. In round two, two students paired up while three were independent. All students were doing a good job of pretend reading and discussing the pictures, but the books were too complex for actual reading. *No book boxes containing leveled readers are used. This is a good time to revisit texts from guided reading groups. Vocabulary/sight words*

Center three had students completing two tasks. The first task was to build and write a sentence. The worksheet had a picture of a cupcake and the words: is Here cupcake a. Student had to cut the words out, glue in the correct order, write the sentence, and color the cupcake. The second task was to write another sentence about the cupcake on the back. Round one had three students working in the center. All three students were engaged in the first task, but only one got to the second task. He wrote on the back: I see a cupcake. The second round had two students. One student glued: a is cupcake Here on her worksheet. The other student told her it was incorrect and how to fix it. The first student also wrote the sentence incorrectly: I lgk me cupcake. She was corrected again. The second student completed the first task correctly and wrote three sentences: I see a cupcake in the sdros, I like the cupcake, My cupcake. *Good collaboration.*

Vocabulary/sight words, comprehension, phonics

In center four students had two tasks as well. The first task was to cut out sight words and match to scrambled letters. Examples: ese-see, eahv-have, ym-my, rae-are, lapy-play, si-is. The second task was a write the room activity. Students were given Valentine words in which they had to find words in the classroom that began with each letter in the given word. Example:

H

E

A

R

T

In both rounds three students were engaged in the center. The first round had all three students working independently and two got to the second task. In the second round, one student corrected another one when she noticed the student putting have with ese, play with eahv, and see with rae. All three got to the second task. *Good collaboration.*

Vocabulary/sight words

Place: Teacher J's Classroom

Date/Time: 2/10/14, 9:45- 10:25

Upon entering teacher J's classroom, students were transitioning from whole group into literacy centers. There were several boys jumping on each other and wrestling on the floor. Teacher J redirected students throughout and left her group to address issues in centers and check students work. When she did, her group got out of hand and resumed wrestling and hitting each other with books. *I am assuming she left her group because I was in there and she wanted to make sure the students in centers were on task.* Teacher J checked some work at the completion of centers while others she told to be put their work in their mailbox to be checked later. There were two rounds of centers. Teacher J and the para worked with one group for both rounds. One round was guided reading while the other round focused on matching pictures and blends. Teacher selected centers and groups were homogeneous.

Group one was five students and they started literacy centers with building sentences. Students chose a bag and took the words in it to form a sentence. They then wrote the sentence in their journals. Some examples of completed sentences:

A sun is yellow.

The Bald Eagle is our National bird.

The sun is made of gases.

Do you like winter?

One student helped another one when they could not read the word "National".

After round one, this group moved to read to self. Two girls were reading to each other, with one helping the other read a level B text. One student was reading a level C fluently and independently, two reading level D. No tracking print. *Some collaboration. Can students track print? Good use of leveled readers. Fluency, comprehension, phonics, vocabulary/sight words*

Group two was five students that started with read to someone. Three girls formed a group and took turns reading to each other. Two boys paired up. All of these students read fluently at a level B and C. All on ask, no tracking print. During round two this group moved to work with words. In this center, the students were supplied with 6 short o pictures (top, dog, mop, dot mom, hop) and they had to write the CVC word under each picture. Three students wrote not for top, one student wrote hot for hop, and one student did not know the /h/ sound. *If students had sounded out the completed words they would have realized what they had wrote was wrong.* After writing these words, they then were to write 3 sentences on the back using the short o words and their individual word walls as a sight word resource. Examples of sentences:

1- The dog is fat.

2- The dot is black.

3- The dog is gowen to ma chex. *Fluency, phonics, vocabulary/sight words*

Group three was four students. Two were listening to A Berenstain Bears book on the computer while the other two played a race car game. They then rotated. There were two race car games, one was CVC words and the other was CCVC words. The students rolled a dice and went around the board, sounding out and reading the words. In the first round, a higher student helped the other one when needed to sound out the words. The lower one had a great deal of difficulty with vowel sounds and blending words together. *Good collaboration*

In round two, the students just rolled the dice and moved their car wherever they wanted. They did not blend or read words. *These students did not seem to understand the game and did not work the whole time. There was no redirection. Fluency, phonics, vocabulary/sight words*

Place: Teacher K's classroom

Date/Time: 2/5/14, 12:00-12:45

Upon entering teacher K's classroom, the students were already engaged in round one of literacy centers. Teacher K does a mini-lesson, one round of literacy centers, another mini-lesson, and another round of literacy centers. During each round of literacy centers, teacher K and the para meet with a guided reading group. Work was checked by teacher and para at the end of literacy centers. Student work was then placed in individual folders. Teacher selected centers and groups were homogenous.

Center one, round one was completing word work and consisted of four students. There were several games to choose from in this center, including matching letters to pictures (ending sounds), putting ABC cards in order, writing ending sounds for pictures (dry erase), sorting and writing words that begin with the sh sound and those that do not, sorting pictures that begin with the sh sound. Two students were matching the letters to pictures (ending sounds) together. One student corrected the other when he got it wrong. Second round had four students as well. Two were working together on putting the alphabet in order. They used a chart for reference. One student completed the writing ending sounds dry erase activity, but wrote all beginning sounds (*accountability?*). One student started matching ending sounds to pictures, but quit half way through and started sorting the sh/not sh words (*Correct sorting, accountability?*) *Phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary/sight words*

Center two, first round consisted of three students drawing a picture and writing about what makes them happy (*kindergarten's writing assessment theme*). Students were sounding out words.

Examples of writing:

1- bln haus can

2- The zoo is fan (fun). Waet is a zoo. War is the zoo.

3- I see Pete the cat and green.

Student B traced letters on a dry erase board when writing was completed.

Second round examples of writing:

1- I love my Nana nana I love my pepe pepe.

2- hok is saw.

3- Me and my fan are plaeg at the pak. *Vocabulary/sight words, phonics*

Center three, first round had two students paired up and reading to each other (read to someone – Daily 5). Each student had a baggie with leveled readers in it. Students each took turns reading the same book to each other and then drew their favorite part and wrote sight words from book. Students explained to each other what they drew. Students

were engaged and reading fluently. *Good collaboration*

Round two had one student reading to self. This girl was reading a level A book. She was successfully sounding out CVC words, such as cat, dog, mop. Two pairs were engaged in reading to each other. In one pair, only one student was reading to the other (level A reader). In the other pair, both took turns reading pages in the same book (level F reader). They were reading fluently, with one student helping the other as needed in reading words. (Book – Magpies Baking Day). *Good use of leveled readers. Vocabulary/sight words, fluency, comprehension, phonics*

Center four was the listening center and there were three students in round one and one student in round two. Each student listened to and followed along with the story, then drew a picture of something that happened in the story. *Fluency, comprehension, vocabulary/sight words*

One student was on the computer during round one and another one round two, matching lower and uppercase letters on Starfall. *Para told me one student arrived a month ago and speaks no English, the other student is very low and has difficulty getting along with other students. Good support, letter identification. Phonics*

Appendix G: Observation Data—Round 2

Place: Teacher A's classroom

Date/Time: 4/23/14, 9:45 – 10:30 a.m.

Teacher A was giving center directions when I entered the classroom. There were 2 independent groups, a teacher led and para led group. Teacher A choose the centers for the students. All student worked was checked at the completion of literacy center time. Teacher A was leading a guided reading group. In the para's group, students were reading sight words together, then played a sight word game. Each student chose 6 sight words to write at the bottom of a numbered graph, then rolled the numbered dice and wrote the sight word in the correct column. Groups were homogeneous and center placement was decided by teacher A.

The task of center one was tracing a picture of a crown on cardstock, then cutting it out. The students then drew pictures and wrote "q" words on the crown. Pictures and words were provided as a resource. One student was guided along by another student. All students completed the task. One student moved into another task, which was writing sentences on a piece of paper. His sentences were: I moet ans to he wap a et, I do the quiet. *Teacher informed me this was her lowest group, the student needing help is new to the classroom. Vocabulary, phonics*

The task of center two was the same with the addition of writing a story based on "q" words first. There were students in this group. They began with writing their stories. There were "q" pictures and words provided for this group as well. Examples of stories:
1- One day a quail went for a walk. The quail found a quarter. He pilid it up. He send it to his frend. Of all the walking he got tider. He wet home and he grad sope. He went to bed. good niyt. The End.

2- Once upon a time a queen was siting on her throne. She was about to pic up her crown she felt and felt but it wasint thaer. I have lost my crown. Tel the gards to serch the hol itiere town and casl too. Finlee tha found the crown and never lost it agin.

3- One day a "little" quarter went "his" friends "house" but "someone" shouted HELP ME he saw a peinny in the mur the quarter had en IDEA he went and for hes flying chair and get the peiny the end

4- Once upon atime there was a girl she had a quilt that she loved and she stil loves it but one day her mom said "you need to give up on that quilt. I'm not giving you up quilty. Okay I'll give it up now."

5- Once there was a queen. She lost her quilt so she told her mom and dad and the queen had a ide.

6- Once upon time ther was a little quail he loved to run

Four students completed their stories and moved into making their crown. *Teacher mentioned this was her high group. Good phonetic spelling, use of blends and digraphs,*

long and short vowel patterns, and some proper use of quotation marks. Vocabulary/sight words, phonics

Place: Teacher B's classroom

Date/Time: 4/22/14, 9:30 – 10:15 a.m.

Upon entering the classroom, students were moving from whole group into small groups. Students choose their centers in the morning. Teacher B. and her para both pulled a small group during each round of centers. Teacher B was conducting guided reading groups, while the para was reviewing sight words with her small group. Students put work in their folder to be checked at the end of the day. The special education student kept calling children's names and making faces at them. Another student that is in the process of being identified special education was also disruptive, walking around the room and interrupting groups of students. Centers are student selected and groups are heterogeneous.

Center one consisted of students rolling dice that had sight words written on them. The task was to roll dice and write sight words several times on a line. The paper accommodated six sight words. Examples of sight words included it, look, my, get, and, A, go, the, & me. In round one there were three students, all were on task. Two of these students completed one page and started writing on another. All three students were correctly reading the words. Round two consisted of three students. One student drew a picture on back of page (*special education student*), the other two wrote words on the front and then drew a picture on the back. Two students completed the task from the second round. *Vocabulary/sight words*

Center two consisted of students rolling sight words and writing a sentence with each word. All students completed the task. Round one had three students reading and sounding out words while writing. One student was writing words and not sentences (*special education student*). One student was assisting another spell and sound out words. *Vocabulary, phonics*

Examples of writing:

1- me is gowen to the stor, I wit to the pr

2- a bird is grweN to the plandit, the brid is fliyen

Three students were in round 2. Examples of writing:

1- Me and my mom are good, A hat is big, The bird want up

2-The bret is fliye, I see a cat

3- The cat is with me, Is it for me? *Vocabulary/sight words, phonics*

Center three was the technology center. Three students were in both rounds and engaged in Starfall, listening to and reading along with stories, and spelling sight words. All students working individually and on task. *Vocabulary/sight words, comprehension, fluency*

Center four was students reading leveled readers and writing a response. Round one had two students that were off task a great deal. When writing a response, they were copying sentences from the level B reader. Round two had two students as well. They were on task with a level B reader and also copying sentences from the text. *Should students be*

writing student created sentences here, not copying? Comprehension, fluency, phonics, vocabulary/sight words

Center five round one and two had two students highlighting sight words in a Recycle poem. They then shared a large dry erase board and were writing sight words from the poem and word wall. All students were reading words as writing on board. The first round students were engaged and on-task. The second round students started drawing pictures after writing a few words on board. *Vocabulary/sight words, fluency*

Place: Teacher Cs classroom

Date/Time: 5/7/14, 9:50-10:35

Upon entering Teacher Cs classroom students had just entered their literacy centers. Teacher C pulled three reading groups, assessing sight words or letters/sounds and chorally reading leveled readers together. Para was using individual words to create a sentence. Each student then wrote their sentence on and read from a dry erase board. All student work was checked at the completion of literacy centers. Center groups were homogeneous; teacher selected centers for students.

Center one had four students engaged in writing. A paper was provided that had a picture at the top with four rectangles to write describing words. After writing words, they were to write a sentence about the picture using the describing words. Students were then to write sight words on the back of paper. All students were working together trying to sound out describing words. All wrote the same describing words. None of the students wrote a sentence at the bottom. Two students wrote words on back. Examples of describing words: no, fim, Foster, gos. Examples of words on back: tem, emt, men, ten; in, no, mom, put, pwe, is two, so. *Para told me this was the lower group.*

Vocabulary/sight words, phonics

Center two utilized Smartboard and student computer. Two students were spelling sight words on the Smartboard. One student was very engaged. The other student sat and watched for a while, then asked for a turn and began helping the other student. The students were spelling from a pre-primer list, consisting of 40 sight words. Four students utilized the student computer and took AR (accelerated reader) tests. *One student did not pass the AR test.* *Vocabulary/sight words, phonics*

Five students in center three were completing activities using the -less suffix. The first task was to write -less words using configuration boxes. Students then filled in sentences with correct word. Pictures and words were provided for support. Examples of sentences: No color is _____. A phone with no cord is _____. All students completed the first task correctly; one student completed the second task correctly. Two students then wrote sentences on the back. Both were sounding out and reading words as writing. Examples:

1- I see my frin Jorita. She wit to the cat stor. I like too play at the pak.

2- I can kol sola on a cols for. I can sew no klis. *Vocabulary/sight words, phonics*

Five students in center four were engaged in story writing. Their stories were to be written from a graphic organizer paper. Two students were completing the graphic organizer paper while three while writing their stories. Stories:

1- Prince Elyison the casl sining let it go with Victrire and Amir they sing for alog time until some thing happened to them a big monstr came up Eliy screamed so loud they all ran away the monstr chased them. Eliy fell down she started to cri it hirdtid the most rseivs them monstr ran awy they hugged Elyison

2- Once upon a time they lived a girl named princess else and princess anna they were sisters princess else was singing let it go in the castle and I like that song and do you want to build a snowman and there are my favorite songs.

3- Mrs. Foster went running in the forest with Mr. Foster and they jumped over a fire. She didn't last year. She felt happy she went with her friends and she loved it and she said let's run some more. and she even had food and drinks. *Phonics, vocabulary/sight words*

Center 5 was reading. Two students were reading together. Two students were reading by themselves. They were reading emergent reader books fluently and accurately. One of these students was reading a Dr. Seuss book, sounding out words as needed. All students were engaged. *Fluency, phonics, vocabulary/sight words*

Center 6 had four students reading simple sentences and drawing a picture to match.

Examples of sentences:

- 1- You have three orange balls.
- 2- Where is the flower?
- 3- Could you give me seven hats?
- 4- My dad likes the fish.

All students were engaged and completed the task. They then completed kindergarten boggle together, where they had random letters in a tic-tac-toe type grid and were to make words using the letters.

Examples of words made: in, a, on, an, pan *Comprehension, phonics, vocabulary/sight words*

Place: Teacher D's class

Date/Time: 4/23/14, 1:00 - 1:45

Students had just become engaged in literacy centers when I entered. Teacher D and para were leading a guided reading group. Differentiation took place within these two centers as guided reading was based on leveled readers. Two groups were independent. Both of these groups were completing the same tasks, no differentiation was observed. The tasks consisted of circling Z's and underlining sight words in My Zz Book, an emergent reader book. Students then traced Z's and colored pictures of things that began with Z. Teacher and para checked student work at the completion of centers. Teacher selected centers, groups were homogeneous. *Students seemed to be much more on task than the last observation*

Both groups had six students. Group one had many students not on task to begin with. A boy and girl were clapping and talking, another child was playing with her scissors. Eventually they all got on task and completed the assignments. Three students were reading the My Zz Book fluently and accurately. After completing assignments these students played a variety of games, including finding matching rhyming words and sight words. *Vocabulary/sight words, phonics, phonemic awareness*

Group two had all students on task. All students were tracking print and reading the book correctly. All students completed the task. When this group finished the task they began reading leveled readers from their book boxes. One student was reading level A, but having difficulty with words in all books. Two level B fluently and accurately. Three students were reading level C. Two read fluently and correctly while one was reading but skipping words. *Vocabulary/sight words, phonics, fluency*

Place: Teacher E's classroom

Date/Time: 5/15/14, 9:45-10:30

Upon entering Teacher E's classroom, students were engaged in independent literacy centers. All students were highly engaged and on-task. Teacher E pulled one student and assessed sight word knowledge, then pulled others to conduct running records. The para was working with a group of 7 students playing alphabet bingo. The para would say the sound for each letter and students would identify the corresponding letter. Teacher selected centers, groups were homogeneous. Teacher and para checked student work.

Para noted that this group of students still needed to build letter/letter sound knowledge

Center one consisted of six students writing numbers to 100. All students completed the task and started playing math games.

Center two had six students writing to the prompt: This summer I am going to... One student asked a friend several times how to spell words. The friend told him to sound it out and when the first student exhibited some difficulties, the friend helped him sound it out. All students were reading their sentences/stories while writing.

Examples of writing:

- 1- This summer I am going to a swimming park. I was under the wooder. The wooder was blue. The wooder has shres.
- 2- This summer I am going to my birthday. It has a reibon on me. I have a has. My mom and my dad.
- 3- This summer I am going to tak swimming lesins when it sotpps raning today. When it sotpps raning the pool be ohpid today and in summer. I whel be taking swimming lesins.
- 4- This summer I am going to my old school. Becuze I misst the field trips. The bus takes me. I have a frind named Cherisan. He is a grat frind.
- 5- This summer I am going to the wder perk. I like the water perk. The water perk I am going into the water. I am going to spru water. I am going on a water slide.
- 6- This summer I am going to the water to my old skool. There was two poos and one wotr park. Thay are nis.

All students completed their writing then played rhyming and/or opposite matching games. As students made a match, they would write the words in their notebook. *Phonics, vocabulary/sight words, phonemic awareness*

Center three had five students. Their task was writing letters in ABC order. An example was provided and used by one student. Afterwards, the students responded to the prompt: School is fun because... One student helped another sound out words. Examples:

- 1- School is fun because we play free centers. We wash the liyon keng wen wr playing.
- 2- School is fun because we do little wrok.
- 3- School is fun because I go to the playgrad. It is fun.
- 4- School is fun because I like to go at sowt. It was fam.
- 5- School is fun because I git to play. It is fun.

6- School is fun because I like soos kois I gat asis. My soos is fon.

All students completed the writing and got books from the shelf. These were not leveled readers and students were pretend reading. *Phonics, vocabulary/sight words*

Place: Teacher F's classroom

Date/Time: 5/1/14, 1:00-1:45

Upon entering the classroom, teacher was reviewing parts of a book and genres. Students went to centers based on their choice. Groups were heterogeneous. Teacher completed two running records then led a guided reading group for each round. The para was out and the sub was working with two children to complete their writing on frogs. *Common Core/Literacy based theme*

Center one was free writing. Both rounds used the word wall for writing. Four students were in round one. One student was helping another sound out words. Examples of sentences:

1- I like to play jumping jacks with Jewell, Sanya, and Jadelyn.

2- I like my cat.

3- All the caters are in a pupa. Now they are gowin to be a butterflys soon. They sher are gowing to be oretty when it come out of the pupa.

4- My fed and me. His n is sed like thia Alexander.

Round two had four students also. One student was helping his friend sound out words.

Examples of sentences:

1- I wit hom in wit to the sre in bid cipeu in we bot srur.

2- I love to play weth my fred Ladeyn. Because she is nis to me. Layden is my esu fred. I love to pec flowers weith my freds.

3- I was playing with Jewell an Avia because thr very nise. *Phonics, vocabulary/sight words*

Center two was writing on wipe-off books and playing alphabet, sight word and rhyming games. In round one, four students were sharing the wipe-off books while the other student was taking letter blocks and making a tower. In round two, two students were talking and laughing. The teacher asked them to leave the center and sit on the floor away from each other. The other three students shared the wipe-off books and were on task.

Vocabulary/sight words, phonics, phonemic awareness

Center three was reading to someone or read to self. Leveled readers were available. Two students were taking turns reading level "C" books to each other. Three students were reading to themselves. They were all on task. Round two had four students reading to each other. They were all reading level "C". One student was helping another sound out words. *Fluency, phonics, vocabulary/sight words*

Center four was computer. Two students were in each round. They were on Starfall and were reading along with a text. They then completed interactive activities such as select words and provide illustrations. All students were engaged and on task. *Fluency, comprehension, vocabulary/sight words, phonics*

Place: Teacher G's classroom

Date/Time: 4/30/14, 12:30 – 1:00

Teacher G was giving center directions when I entered the classroom. Teacher led a guided reading group during literacy centers. Para led a group in putting given words in alphabetical order. Teacher kept leaving her group to address behavior issues at independent literacy centers and check student progress. Students were very loud. Teacher selected centers, groups are homogeneous. Work was checked by teacher and para at the completion of center time. *Teacher G was out on maternity leave when class was observed, a long-term sub was filling in*

Center one had three students listening to a story on tape. There was only one book, all students were trying to look at it together. *This was very difficult for the students, would have been better to have had more copies.* Students then completed a reader response paper, listing the title, author, number of pages, rating the book by circling a neutral, sad, or happy face, then drawing their favorite part. Two students completed the task. The other student completed part of it and then started trying to draw on the other students' papers. *This student has behavior problems and the para had to intervene. Fluency, comprehension, phonics, vocabulary/sight words*

Center two had two students working independently, learning and reviewing sight words using a Language Master. Words are "fed through" and read to the student. The student reads with and/or after the machine tells the word. Students were engaged and reading the sight words. *Fluency, vocabulary/sight words*

Center three had two students working collaboratively on the computer. Students were on Starfall, engaging with interactive texts. Students were reading, choosing sight words, and adding illustrations to text. Students were on-task. *Fluency, comprehension, vocabulary/sight words, phonics*

Center four was sight word concentration. Four students were engaged in this center, playing collaboratively. One student was reading words and helping another read words. The other two students were not reading the sight words. One student did not seem to understand the process of matching words. These students had a difficult times taking turns and the teacher had to address their behavior several times. *Vocabulary/sight words, fluency*

Center five was a rhyming word center. Two students matched pictures of rhyming words then wrote sentences using some of the words. The students were very engaged and on-task. Examples of sentences:

1- I like my cat. My mom has a purse. The clown is funny! I have to go to the nurse. I am on a boat. I am a king. I have a ring.

2- a truck is sushnshg that you ride on. A duck trn into a goose. A match is sumshg to make fire. *Phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary/sight words*

Center six was word study and had two pairs of students taking words out of envelopes and putting in order to make a sentence. The complexity of sentences varied between the two groups. They then wrote the sentences in their journal. Two students were working collaboratively and had harder sentences: The brown dog chased its tail. Two little boys ate pizza for lunch. Mom and I are going to the mall today. Did you see that big hippo? The other two students were also working collaboratively and had easier sentences: The girl ran home. We can jump. Turn the lights on. Please shut the door. One student was helping the other in this pair. Both pairs completed numerous sentences and most were completed correctly. The teacher came over a couple of times to assist. *Fluency, comprehension, phonics, vocabulary/sight words*

Place: Teacher H's Classroom

Date/Time: 4/29/14, 10:30 – 11:15

Students were in whole group reviewing center rules when I entered. After students went to literacy centers, the teacher conducted running records and the para assisted students in taking AR (Accelerated Reader) tests. Literacy centers are selected each day by the teacher. Groups are heterogeneous. Work was checked at the completion of center time.

Center one was story writing and students were using sentence frames to guide them in writing their stories. Round one had four students. All students assisted each other as needed in sounding out words and were reading their stories while completing. Students were on task. Examples of stories:

1- Once upon a time there was a monster. He looked ugly and disgusting. He liked to eat people because people are made of meat.

2- There was a little fish named Madey. She had a friend named Isreal. He was very good. They had to fed him.

3- On Friday I want to the prk. You should have seen this big dog. She looked so men.

Round two had three students using sentence starter strips. Two students were on-task and helping each other sound out words as needed. The two students used a chart with pictures and words on it as a resource for writing. Examples of sentences:

1- I like my DAD because my dad is nise. I see my Dog. I love my mom and dad. What if I can sleep.

2- I wonder if I can drink. I like cats. I see a spider.

One student was finding 3, 4, 5, and 6 letter words in a magazine. He was engaged and completed the task. *Para mentioned the is a English language learner and is still learning words. Vocabulary/sight words, phonics*

Center two was the listening center. Four students were in each round. They all listened attentively to the story. At the completion, students paired up and read to each other. They used their leveled readers. Two students were reading level "D" and two reading level "F". *Fluency, comprehension, vocabulary/sight words*

Center three was read to self or read to someone. Each round had four students using bags with leveled readers. Two students in round one were reading together and helping each other with sight words and sounding out as needed. One student in round two read each page to his friend and the friend then echoed her. All students were engaged and reading correctly and fluently. *Fluency, vocabulary/sight words, phonics*

Center four was the ABC center. All students were focused. There were four students in round one. Students were not clipping ABCs in order this time, they started with writing words that began with each letter. Students were using the words wall and charts as resources for words. Two students were finding words collaboratively. In round two, one student started writing words while two students started with writing sentences. Examples

of sentences:

1- I see a bat. I see a cat. I see a dog.

2- I like apples. A bee can sueing you. I like my pet cat. Dinosaurs are my farit.

Para mentioned what they do is based on their needs. Some students still clip the ABCs because they are still working with letters. Phonics, vocabulary/sight words

Center fives task was to complete a worksheet on living vs. non-living. Students were to read and write given words under the headers living or non-living. Students were working collaboratively and assisting each other in determining the words. Students were sounding out words. Four students were in round one and two and completed the task and drew pictures on the back. *I noticed a baggie with pictures of living and non-living things and the para mentioned that the lower students that are not readers complete this activity. Comprehension, phonics, vocabulary*

Place: Teacher I's classroom

Date/Time: 4/21/14, 9:45 -10:30

Students had just started literacy centers when I entered the room. Teacher I. utilizes two rounds of literacy centers. During each round the teacher and para led a guided reading group. At the completion of centers, teacher and para checked each students work. Incomplete work was placed in individual folders to be completed on free center Friday. Students were running in and out of the bathrooms and slamming doors. The teacher addressed this issue and students resumed tasks. Student selected centers, heterogeneous groups.

Center one was read to self or read to someone. Students were to read a book and then complete a reader response paper. The reader response consisted of students scoring how much they liked the book by coloring 1-5 smiley faces. They then were to draw a picture of their favorite part. The texts used were not leveled, rather teacher read aloud books off a shelf. Round one had two students reading to themselves and two students reading to each other. One of the students reading to themselves was engaged in pretend reading based on the pictures. He completed the reader response task as well, drawing a picture of his favorite part. The other read to self student spent more time playing with a stuffed animal than reading, he did not completed the reader response task. The two students engaged in read to each other played with a coat, ending up putting it over both their heads and talking. There was no evidence of reading. *Reader response could help the read to someone students be on task.*

In round two, five students were engaged in read to self. These students were highly engaged in pretend reading. One student completed the reader response paper, illustrating and writing about his favorite part. Writing: I like the part win he saw the rado. Another student completed the reader response paper, illustrating and writing random letters. *More accountability with the reader response paper. Would leveled readers be better for comprehension purposes? Students were unable to correctly read these books due to word complexity. Comprehension, vocabulary/sight words, phonics*

Center two was utilizing the SmartBoard. Three students were in round one. Two of the students were actively engaged, while the third sat in a chair and observed the other two. The task was to select a spoken sight word from a group of five. The two engaged students read the sight words. *Vocabulary/sight words*

In round two, two students were using given letters to spell a spoken sight word. These students used the sight words on the word wall as a resource for spelling words correctly. They were saying letters while spelling and reading words. One student was on the computer matching letters and letter sounds. All of these students on task.

Vocabulary/sight words, phonics

Listening was center three. The task was to listen to a given text and then complete a response paper. The paper consisted of selecting five words from the text that they could

read by themselves, then illustrating their favorite part. There is only one book to be shared by others. Round one had three students that were on task. Examples of words: do, does, he, all, for, go, to, make. All students were reading the words while writing. One student wrote a sentence to go with the illustration of his favorite part. The sentence: I like when he ran up the stairs. *Teacher said writing was optional*

Round two had two students on task with listening and completing response paper. Examples of words: the, and, he, no, all. Both drew an illustration of their favorite part. *Fluency, comprehension, vocabulary/sight words*

Center four was free writing. They were to draw a picture and write about it. In round one, three students were engaged in the tasks. They all drew a picture and wrote a sentence. Examples of sentences:

1- I was biyn a cad be is a little cab.

2- I wish I cin hAv a scuRR

3- I gto a puppy and a hr nam is krley kus she is flufey.

Round two had two students. Sentences:

1- I go too the pln thn off.

2- I luv. It is fn. *Vocabulary/sight words, phonics*

Center five had students trace and write 20 sight words. They then were to write three sentences on the back. Three students were in round one. Two were on task and wrote two sentences on the back. The third student only wrote the word "the". Sentences:

1- I have a cat. I am frm gugu.

2- is the car big. The mucex is to big.

Two students were in round 2. One was quickly on task and wrote many sentences: the prsiN walk. that prsin caN tlk. here I am. I like sous. I was playing. CaN I play. Can I get oN. The other student traced words, but did not write them, he did not write any sentences. *Vocabulary/sight words, phonics*

Place: Teacher J's classroom

Date/Time: 4/28/14, 9:45 – 10:30

Upon entering teacher J's classroom, the teachers was giving directions for literacy center tasks. The teacher chooses the centers for the students, groups are homogeneous. Teacher J. and the para circulated through the literacy centers as the tasks were new. Work was checked for accuracy before students proceeded to games or reading. *Teacher did not go over the word family words, which could have proved beneficial for struggling students*

Center one had five students using their imagination to complete a spring picture with manipulatives such as beans, bowtie pasta, spaghetti noodles, etc. All students completed the task and started playing sight word concentration. Students were reading the sight words correctly and on-task. *Fluency, vocabulary/sight words*

Center two involved five students completing an –ail & -ain word family worksheet. Using a given list of words, students had to identify and write the word under the correct word family. They were then to cut out the picture that matched each word. Two students were sounding out to determine each word. One student was copying from his friend sitting next to him. Teacher J had to come over and help two students that were struggling. All students completed the task and retrieved leveled books for reading. Four students read in pairs, while one read independently. One pair was reading a level “B” and the pair was reading level “C”. Level “A” was read by the independent reader. All students were engaged and reading fluently and correctly. *Vocabulary/sight words, phonics, fluency*

Students in center three were completing a task that involved making words that belonged to the –at family. The word cat was given and students were instructed to change the first letter to make additional words. Five students were engaged in this center. Two students started working collaboratively, writing cat, pat, mat, fat. These students were reading each word as they wrote. One student wrote cap, cat, col. One student wrote some words (bat, pat, fat, rat, that, mat) and allowed the student beside him to copy. He was reading the words to his friend and the friend was repeating them. The para came over and helped the student that was completing the task incorrectly. She also helped the other students come up with additional words. Once students had completed the task, they became engaged in a CVC/CVVC word game. Four students rolled a dice and went around a board, sounding out and reading each word as they landed on it. Only one student could correctly sound out the words. He was helping the other three. The fifth student obtained leveled readers for independent reading. She choose level “D”. She was unable to read these books fluently, although she was successful at sounding out some words. *Vocabulary/sight words, phonics, fluency*

The five students in center four were completing an –ake & -ay word family worksheet. The task was using a given list of words, write each word under the correct word family

heading. They were then to write three -ake & -ay words on the back of the paper. Four students completed the first task. Two of these students then turned to the back and wrote plake, make, play; Fay, play, Kay. Teacher J came over and helped the last student complete his work. She then told students to go and read books with each other. Three students choose level "B" books and took turns reading fluently and correctly. Two students choose level "C". They were not reading the book correctly, making up words as they read. *Vocabulary/sight words, phonics, fluency*

Center five had five students playing the game Boogle. On a paper there were mixed up letters and the students had to find words within the connected letters. Three students were quickly on task, helping each other. Correct words found included: yes, our, is, me. Incorrect words included: sal, sru, omi. Two students just sat, saying they did not know what to do. Teacher J came over and helped all students complete the task. After the task was completed, they formed two groups and played a Zap game. This games consisted of sight words and the word "Zap" on craft sticks. Students took turns drawing sticks and reading the words. They kept the sticks until a "Zap" stick was drawn, at which time everyone had to put their sticks back. One student in a group and two students in another group could not read many of the sight words. Other students were reading the words for them as asked. *Vocabulary/sight words*

Place: Teacher K's classroom

Date/Time: 4/22/14, 12:05 – 12:35 p.m.

Upon entering Teacher K's classroom, students were engaged in round one of literacy centers. The teacher and para both were meeting with a small group. The teacher was assessing individual students on sight words. Students then paired up and read sight words to each other. The para was leading a guided reading group. Student work was placed in mailboxes to be checked at the end of the day. Students choose their centers for the day when they enter the classroom in the morning. Heterogeneous groups in centers.

Center ones task was to read to someone and complete a reader response. Each student completed the response, although the students collaborated on what to do. The reader response consisted of writing the title, drawing a picture of their favorite part of the story, and writing sight words that were in the story. Round one had two students reading and responding to a level C text. Some sight words written were: on, I, can, play. Round two had two students reading a level B text. Sight words were: in, can, into out, and. All students engaged and completed the task. In round two, two students opted to read to self. They used their book bins with leveled readers and poetry journals to read. Both of these students started reading to self, but stopped before time was up, one sitting and one playing with his shoe. *At this point in the year, should students be writing sentences in response to text? Fluency, comprehension, vocabulary/sight words, phonics*

Center two was listening, with two students in each round listening to a text and completing a reader response paper. The reader response consisted of writing the title, coloring a smiley or sad face based on students' feelings, and drawing a picture of the story. All students listening to and trying to read along with the text. All students also completed the reader response paper. *Once again, should sentence writing be used here? Fluency, vocabulary/sight words, comprehension*

Center three was free writing. Round one had two students, with one student helping the other sound out words. Examples of sentences:

1- I can see the cat, I love my cat, She is good.

2- I love butterfly.

Round two had one student writing about butterflies. He was using an informational chart that was on display in the writing center as a resource. Examples of sentences:

1- The butterfly can fly. The butterfly can gro. The butterfly is byutfl. A caterpillar is living. *Good sentences and use of resource. Vocabulary/sight words, phonics*

In center four students were completing two worksheets. One had students matching farm words to pictures, another one had students writing missing letters to given farm words. Both round had two students. The first round students were highly engaged and completed the tasks. After the task, the two students worked together to write a sentence: I can wat for my brth. In round two, one student had lines from the words to the pictures

for support. Both of these students also completed the tasks. *Good collaboration in round one and differentiated support in round two. Phonics, vocabulary/sight words*

Center five's task was to trace, read, and illustrate a given farm story. Each round had two students. In round one, the two students completed the task and spent a great deal of time illustrating. In round two, the students completed the task quickly and began writing sentences on the back. Examples of sentences:

1- I am ritting in Daily Five and then I am going to math centers and then we are going outsid.

2- I

am asass playin ball. Het and my kusun HAMSA Has now shosi. *Good use of correct spelling for first student, the second one is still more of a phonetic speller.*

Comprehension, vocabulary/sight words, phonics

The Smartboard was center six. Two students were in the first round working collaboratively. They had a variety of mixed up words that they were moving around to make sentences. Examples: The butterfly can fly, The caterpillar is little. The second round students had a variety of letters they were using to build sight words. One student was assisting the other. Examples: can, up, see. All students on task with technology. *Good differentiation in the two round tasks. Round two had a student that speaks little English. Vocabulary/sight words, phonics*

The current literacy/science unit of study was on a butterflies life cycle, thus the integration of this topic in centers. The farm topic was the teacher's choice.

Appendix H: Formative Project Assessment

Directions: As you use the activities, please respond to the following questions. We will share your comments at our follow-up sessions over the seven month pilot period. Your feedback is critical in the effectiveness of this manual for planning literacy activities for low-achieving students.

1) What activities have you implemented?

2) What activities have you found to be successful? Why?

3) What suggestions do you have to improve the activities?

4) Has student achievement changed? If so, how?

5) What assessment tools were used to determine mastery of skills? What is most useful and why?

Appendix I: Summative Project Assessment

Directions: Now that you have implemented many research-based literacy activities, please respond to the following questions.

1) What two activities did you find most useful in the area of phonics? Why?

2) What two activities did you find most useful in the area of phonemic awareness? Why?

3) What two activities did you find most useful in the area of comprehension? Why?

4) What two activities did you find most useful in the area of fluency? Why?

5) What two activities did you find most useful in the area of vocabulary? Why?

6) Did the use of objective assessments help determine what activities to choose? Explain.

Appendix J: Observational Checklist of Teacher Behavior

Observational Checklist of Teacher Behavior

Teacher: _____

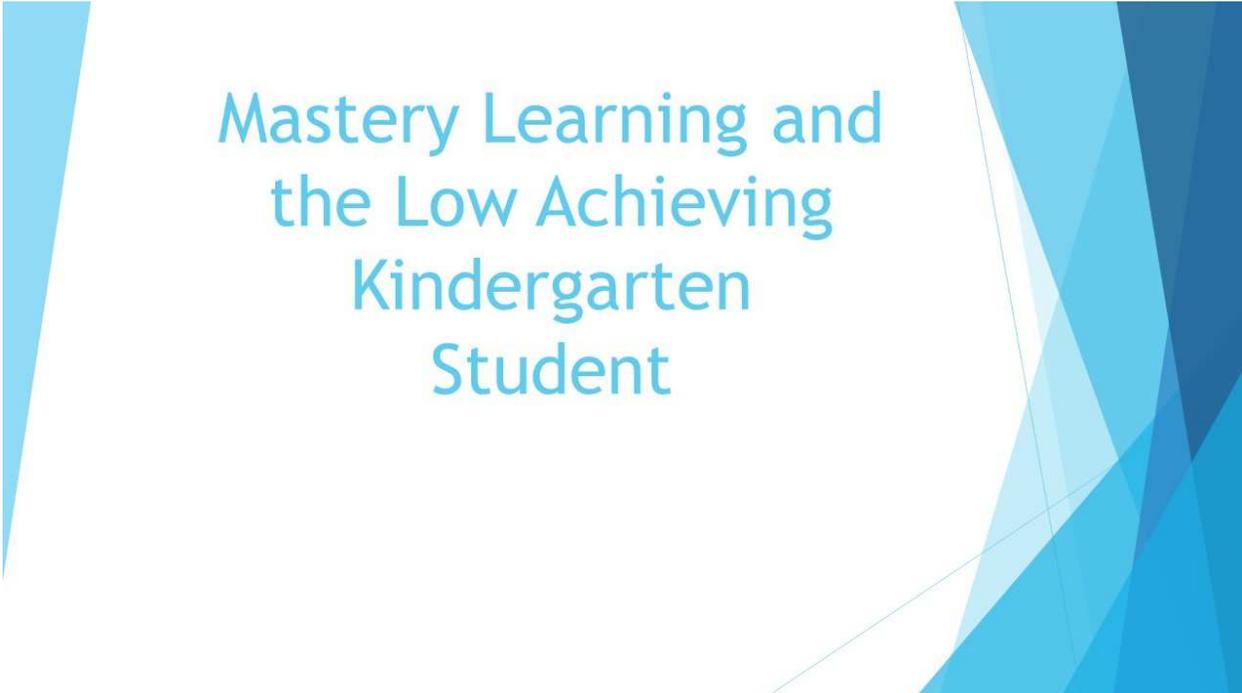
| Behavior | Always | Sometimes | Not Observed |
|--|--------|-----------|--------------|
| Students are engaged and on-task | | | |
| Students successfully complete work independently of the teacher | | | |
| Students successfully complete work independently of classmates | | | |
| Student work is checked for accuracy | | | |

Number of students working collaboratively: _____

Number of students working independently: _____

Activities observed: _____

Appendix K: The Project—PowerPoint



Mastery Learning and the Low Achieving Kindergarten Student



The Primary Grade Teachers Responsibility

Teaching young children to read has been described as one of the most important responsibilities of primary grade teachers (National Association for the Education of Young Children, [NAEYC], 2009)

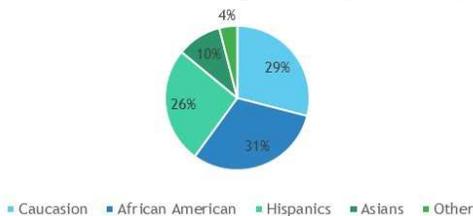
The Importance of Learning to Read in the Early Years

- ▶ Learning achieved during the early grades is likely to be maintained throughout the subsequent school years (Shanahan, 2008)
- ▶ Reading performance in the early years is a critical component of becoming a proficient reader (Armbruster, Lehr, & Osborn, 2001; Foster & Miller, 2007; National Reading Panel, 2000).
- ▶ Early reading difficulty impacts motivation and school completion (Garnier, Stein, & Jacobs, 1997)
- ▶ Students who struggle academically in early elementary school are at an increased risk for problem behaviors in their later school years as academic rigor intensifies (McIntosh, Horner, Chard, Boland, & Good, 2006)

Low Academic Achievement

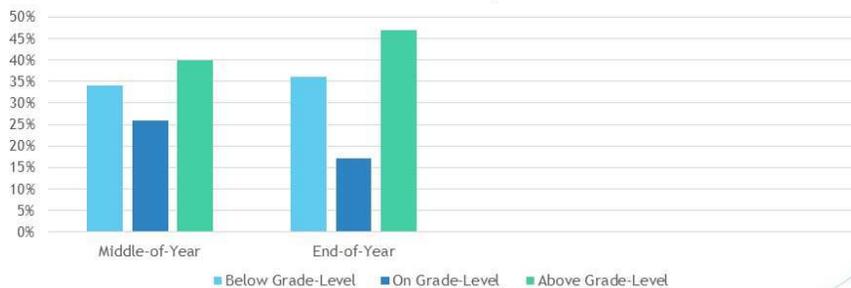
Reading problems are greatest within low-income families, ethnic minority groups, and English language learners (Lonigan & Shanahan, 2008)

Peachtree Student Population (2012-2013)



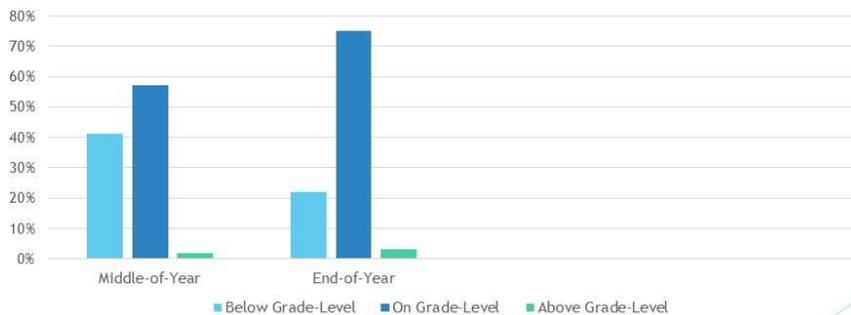
The Local Problem - A High Proportion of Below-Grade Reading Scores at the Completion of Kindergarten

Profile Sheet Data - Grade Level Comparison of Reading Levels from Middle to End-of-Year (Peachtree Elementary School, 2013-2014)



The Local Problem - A High Proportion of Below-Grade Reading Scores at the Completion of Kindergarten

GKIDS - Grade Level Comparison of Reading Skills from Middle to End-of-Year (Georgia Department of Instruction, 2014)



Addressing the Problem: The Workshop Approach

- ▶ Whole group mini-lessons
- ▶ Small group guided reading lessons
- ▶ Literacy centers: Small group and independent learning opportunities

Why Implement Literacy Centers?

- ▶ Provides multiple opportunities for students to engage in meaningful, differentiated literacy activities (Falk-Ross, 2008; O'Donnell & Hitpas, 2010; Reutzel & Clark, 2011; Stout, 2009)
- ▶ Student collaboration is promoted, student motivation is facilitated, and differentiated learning opportunities are provided based on individual ability levels (Arquette, 2007; Just Read Florida, 2012; Maurer, 2010; Morrow, 1997; Peterson & Davis, 2008; Tobin & McInnes, 2008)
- ▶ Students are able to practice and increase the development of their literacy skills as they are actively engaged in reading and writing activities either alone or with others of similar ability levels (Morrow, 1997)
- ▶ Placing students at literacy centers according to ability level facilitates multiple opportunities to develop and master reading skills, while fostering engagement and motivation to learn as students experience success working at their individual readiness level (Arquette, 2007; Reutzel & Clark, 2011; Peterson & Davis, 2008)

The Research Study

- ▶ The study investigated the extent to which implementation of literacy centers was consistent with the principles of mastery learning based on differentiation by ability

What is Mastery Learning Theory?

Mastery Learning Theory views the ability of each child to achieve higher levels of learning if allowed to work at his own pace and academic level (Bloom, 1968). As students attain mastery at their current ability level, he or she moves up to the next higher level. Mastery is usually defined as a criterion-based level of competence expressed, for example, as a percentage of correct answers or demonstrated skills. Thus, there is an assumption that learning tasks can be organized into a hierarchy of difficulty (Bloom, 1978).

Mastery Learning Techniques

- ▶ Use of objective assessments to determine placement and achievement
- ▶ Integration of independent and peer collaboration tasks
- ▶ Variety in learning tasks to build and reinforce skills
- ▶ Implementation of instruction differentiated by ability
- ▶ Multiple opportunities to master skills
- ▶ Mastery of skills evident before moving on to subsequent skills
- ▶ Enrichment activities for students that have mastered skills

The Studies Findings

- ▶ Teachers utilized both objective and subjective assessments to assign students to initial learning tasks and to monitor student progress throughout the school year
- ▶ Although students were given opportunities to engage in both independent and collaborative tasks, 90% of the time during the first observation was devoted to collaborative work and only 10% to independent work
- ▶ During the second observation, the balance between collaborative and independent work was equal
- ▶ The overwhelming majority of learning tasks were focused on building literacy skills
- ▶ Despite the high level of differentiated instruction, not all students were able to complete assigned tasks independently

The Study: Mastery Learning in Kindergarten Classes at Peachtree Elementary

- ▶ Throughout the study it was determined that differentiated literacy center tasks for average and high achieving students were appropriate and promoted literacy development
- ▶ Differentiated literacy center tasks for low achievers appeared to be too difficult, with many low achievers off task and unable to successfully complete work independently

The Study: Practices That May Not Work

- ▶ Inaccurate determination of low achieving students ability levels through subjective teacher judgment
- ▶ Too much time devoted to collaboration among low achievers, leading to a reduced amount of time needed to develop individual skill
- ▶ Collaboration unsuccessful as low achievers may not have had sufficient skills to provide peer support

Determining Student Academic Levels: Research & Peachtree Practices

- ▶ Objective assessments set forth the operating procedures of defining what is meant by mastery and the necessary evidence to be collected to establish whether or not a student has achieved it (Bloom, 1968)
- ▶ Objective assessments used in kindergarten: Fountas and Pinnell benchmark assessment system to determine reading levels and both GKIDS and checklists to evaluate skill mastery
- ▶ Subjective assessments do not provide equal learning opportunities for all students, as observations have shown that positive reinforcement, encouragement, and interactions are given more frequently to the top third or fourth of the class and not others (Bloom, 1978)
- ▶ Subjective assessments used in kindergarten: Teacher judgment based on observations of students working independently and within reading groups

Research and Vocabulary

- ▶ Research suggests vocabulary practices which are differentiated based on the needs of the learner and include word study, acting out, illustrating words, and explicit teaching of text vocabulary are associated with high vocabulary performance (Silverman & Crandell, 2010).
- ▶ Differentiation in small group settings promotes the extension of vocabulary through a systematic progression of skills and content and is effective at increasing vocabulary and comprehension (Fien et al., 2011)
- ▶ Studies have demonstrated young English language learners engaged in small group and individual settings are allowed multiple opportunities to practice and expand word knowledge based on their vocabulary level, promoting vocabulary growth (Filippini, Gerber, & Leafstedt, 2012; Roessingh & Elgie, 2009)

What Can We Try? Independent Vocabulary Activities

| Vocabulary Assessment | Activity to Build Skill |
|---------------------------------|--|
| High frequency word recognition | High frequency word matching Spell high frequency words using tactile letters Rainbow write high frequency words Story writing using selected high frequency words Tape assisted reading Independent text reading |

Research and Phonemic Awareness

- ▶ Phonemic awareness skills increase when kindergarten and first-grade ELLs are engaged in explicit, direct, and systematic small group instruction, and participate in independent learning activities that are constantly monitored with subsequent instruction and activity adjustments made based on skill mastery and progression (Gyovai, Cartledge, Kourea, Yourick, & Gibson, 2009)
- ▶ Children with reading difficulties using a sequenced progression of skill lessons in small group settings can develop phonemic awareness and phonemically based decoding skills, and subsequently progress along the skills continuum (Ryder, Tunmer, & Greaney, 2007)

What Can We Try? Independent Phonemic Awareness Activities

| Phonemic Awareness Assessment | Activity to Build Skill |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Rhyme recognition | Match rhyming pictures Sort rhyming pictures |
| Phoneme recognition | Match pictures that begin, end, or have the same medial sound Identify a picture that does not have the same beginning, end, or medial sound |
| Onset and rime blending | Match pictures with same rime Sort pictures by rime |
| Phoneme segmentation | Build snap cube towers to represent the number of phonemes in a given word Match pictures with numbers that represent the number of phonemes |
| Sentence segmentation | Listen to sentences on tape, identify number of words in each sentence |
| Syllable segmentation | Using pictures, identify number of syllables in classmates names Match pictures with same number of syllables |
| Phoneme manipulation | Listen to tape directions to make new words by |

Research and Phonics

- ▶ Studies have shown that phonics development increases in young children with poor phonological skills when flexible small group instruction and independent activities focuses on a series of skills, moving from basic to complex according to skill mastery (Beverly, Giles, & Buck, 2009; Giess, Rivers, Kennedy, & Lombardion, 2010)
- ▶ Children entering kindergarten and first grade with advanced phonic skills benefit more from an instructional emphasis on the meaning of the text compared to a decoding, phonics approach (Sonnenschien, Stapleton, & Benson, 2010)

What Can We Try? Independent Phonics Activities

| Phonics Assessment | Activity to Build Skill |
|--------------------------|--|
| Letter name recognition | Make letters using pasta Form letters using play dough, sand, shaving cream Letter match (upper to upper; lower to lower; upper to lower) Sorting letters |
| Letter sound recognition | Match letters with pictures that begin, end, or have a determined medial sound Write missing letters in words |
| Reading and decoding | Blend onset and rime words Sort words by rime Read and blend syllable cards Match syllable cards to pictures Determine if CVC words are real or nonsense |
| Spelling | Using picture cues, make CVC words Make CVC words using magnetic letters/letter tiles |

Research and Fluency

- ▶ Selecting reading passages based on appropriate difficulty level, exposure to modeled fluent reading, explicit instruction of skills, systematic correction, ongoing progress monitoring, and engagement in repeated readings have proved to be productive strategies at building fluency in ELLs (Begeny, Ross, Greene, Mitchell, & Whitehouse, 2012; Ross & Begeny, 2011; Soriano, Miranda, Soriano, Nieves, & Felix, 2011)
- ▶ Differentiating reading passages according to ability level is a key in fostering the fluency process (Watson, Fore, & Boon, 2009)

What Can We Try? Independent Fluency Activities

| Fluency Assessment | Activity To Build Skill |
|--------------------------|--|
| Letter name recognition | Multiple opportunities to engage in timed letter recognition |
| Letter sound recognition | Multiple opportunities to engage in timed letter-sound recognition |
| Sight word recognition | Multiple opportunities to engage in timed word reading |
| Text reading | Tape assisted reading Repeated readings of texts at student's independent reading level |

Research and Comprehension

- ▶ Students placed in small ability level groups and participate in skill instruction and activities, moving from easier elements of comprehension to more difficult ones as skills are mastered, demonstrate an increase in reading comprehension skills (Solari & Gerber, 2008)
- ▶ Other at-risk students have increased their reading comprehension when placed in small groups based on ability levels and given explicit instruction supporting multiple aspects of reading around leveled texts (Guthrie et al., 2009).

What Can We Try? Independent Comprehension Activities

| Comprehension Assessment | Activity to Build Skill |
|---|--|
| Text comprehension, based on reading of independent text or teacher read text | Match simple sentences to pictures Story map - Illustrate and write about the beginning/middle/end of a story Story map - Illustrate and write about the setting, characters, problem, events, and solution of a story Story map - Illustrate and write about the main idea and supporting details of a story Complete a Venn Diagram comparing/contrasting characters or stories Complete a cause and effect graphic organizer |

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Appendix L: The Project—Literacy Center Activities

Literacy Center Activities

Crystal Cowen

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Phonics

Phonics Assessment

Name _____

Date _____

SKILLS SUMMARY Alphabet Skills

| | |
|---------|--------------------------|
| ___/ 26 | Letter names - uppercase |
| ___/ 26 | Letter names - lowercase |
| ___/ 23 | Consonant sounds |
| ___/ 5 | Long vowel sounds |
| ___/ 5 | Short vowel sounds |

Reading and Decoding Skills

| | |
|---------|--|
| ___/ 10 | Short vowels in CVC words |
| ___/ 10 | Short vowels, digraphs, and <i>-tch</i> trigraph |
| ___/ 20 | Consonant blends with short vowels |
| ___/ 10 | Long vowel spellings |
| ___/ 10 | Variant vowels and diphthongs |
| ___/ 10 | <i>r-</i> and <i>l-</i> controlled vowels |

Spelling Skills

| | |
|--------|----------------------|
| ___/ 5 | Initial consonants |
| ___/ 5 | Final consonants |
| ___/ 5 | CVC words |
| ___/ 5 | Long vowel spellings |

Skills to review:

Skills to teach:

1. Letter Names – Uppercase

Say to the student: *Can you tell me the names of these letters?* If the student cannot name three or more consecutive letters, **say:** *Look at all of the letters and tell me which ones you do know.*

| | | | | | | | | | |
|--------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | D | A | N | S | X | Z | J | L | H |
| | T | Y | E | C | O | M | R | P | W |
| ___/26 | K | U | G | B | F | Q | V | I | |

2. Letter Names – Lowercase

Say to the student: *Can you tell me the names of these letters?* If the student cannot name three or more consecutive letters, **say:** *Look at all of the letters and tell me which ones you do know.*

| | | | | | | | | | |
|--------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | d | a | n | s | x | z | j | l | h |
| | t | y | e | c | o | m | r | p | w |
| ___/26 | k | u | g | b | f | q | v | i | |

3. Consonant Sounds

Say to the student: *Look at these letters. Can you tell me the sound each letter makes?* If the sound given is correct, do not mark the Record Form. If it is incorrect, write the sound the student gives above each letter. If no sound is given, circle the letter. If the student cannot say the sound for three or more consecutive letters, **say:** *Look at all of the letters and tell me which sounds you do know.*

| | | | | | | | |
|--------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | d | l | n | s | x | z | j |
| | t | y | p | c | h | m | r |
| ___/21 | w | g | b | f | q | v | k |

4.Vowel Sounds

Ask the student: *Can you tell me the sounds of each letter?* If the student names the letter, count it as the long vowel sound. Then **ask:** *Can you tell me the other sound for the letter?* The student should name the short vowel sound.

e (l _)(s _) i (l _)(s _) a (l _)(s _) o (l _)(s _) u (l _)(s _)

l = long sound s = short sound

Record *l* on the first line for the long sound (letter name) and *s* for the short sound on the second line. If the student makes an error, record the error over the letter.

____/5 Long vowel sounds (count the number of *l*'s above)

____/5 Short vowel sounds (count the number of *s*'s above)

5.Reading and Decoding

For items A through G, students must read both real and pseudowords (made-up words). For the first line of real words, tell the student: *I want you to read these words.* If the student cannot read two or more of the real words, do not administer the line of pseudowords. Go to the next set of items. Before asking the student to read the line of pseudowords, say: *Now, I want you to read some made-up words. Do not try to make them sound like real words.*

A. Short vowels in CVC words

| | | | | | | |
|---------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|----------|
| ____/ 5 | sip | cat | let | but | hog | (real) |
| ____/ 5 | vop | fut | dit | kem | laz | (pseudo) |

B. Short vowels, digraphs, and *-tch* trigraph

| | | | | | | |
|---------|-------|------|------|--------|-------|----------|
| ____/ 5 | when | chop | ring | shut | match | (real) |
| ____/ 5 | wheck | shom | thax | phitch | chud | (pseudo) |

C. Consonant blends with short vowels

| | | | | | | |
|---------|------|------|------|-------|------|----------|
| ____/ 5 | stop | trap | quit | spell | plan | (real) |
| ____/ 5 | stig | brab | qued | snop | dran | (pseudo) |
| ____/ 5 | clip | fast | sank | limp | held | (real) |

___/5 frep nast wunk kimp jelt (pseudo)

D. Long vowel spellings

___/5 tape key lute paid feet (real)
 ___/5 loe bine joad vay soat (pseudo)

E. r- and l-controlled vowels

___/5 bark horn chirp term cold (real)
 ___/5 ferm dall gorf murd chal (pseudo)

F. Variant vowels and diphthongs

___/5 few down toy hawk coin (real)
 ___/5 voot rew fout zoy bawk (pseudo)

6. Spelling

Give the student a pencil and a sheet of lined paper. Write the student's responses over the words.

A. Tell the student: Listen to each of the words I read and write the **first sound** you hear.

___/5 fit map pen kid hand

B. Tell the student: Listen to each of the words I read and write the **last sound** you hear.

___/5 rub fled leg sell less

C. Tell the student: Listen to each of the words I read and write the **whole word**.

___/5 fork yam sip shop tub

___/5 coin float steep drive spoon

Phonics - Letter Recognition

Alphabet Arc

1. Place the alphabet arc and the letters on a flat surface.
2. Choose a letter, says the letter name, and places it on the matching letter on the alphabet arc.
3. Continue until all letters are matched.

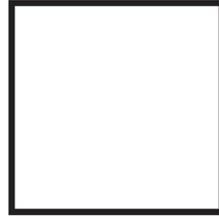
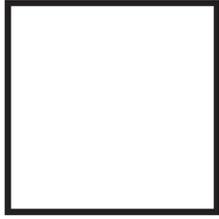
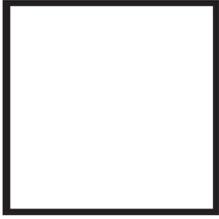
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

Phonics - Letter Recognition

Sorting Letters

1. Place print resources (magazine, newspapers, etc.), scissors, and glue at the center. Provide the student with a student sheet with three target letters.
2. The student names the three target letters on student sheet.
3. Identifies and cuts out target letters from print resources.
4. Glues letters under corresponding target letter on student sheet.
5. Continues until student sheet is complete.



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Phonics – Letter Recognition

Alphabet Letter Tiles/Cards Name Sort

1. Teacher create a t-chart: Label the left side “In my name” and the right side “Not in my name”. Write student name on an index card.
2. Place t-chart on a flat surface. Spread letter tiles/cards beside the t-chart.
3. Using name card as a guide, select one letter tile/card at a time, say letter, place in appropriate column.
4. Place letter tiles on the left side of t-chart in order to spell name.

| | | | |
|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| A | B | C | D |
| E | F | G | H |
| I | J | K | L |
| M | N | O | P |
| Q | R | S | T |
| U | V | W | X |
| Y | Z | | |

| | | | |
|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| a | b | c | d |
| e | f | g | h |
| i | j | k | l |
| m | n | o | p |
| q | r | s | t |
| u | v | w | x |
| y | z | | |

Phonics - Letter Recognition

Picture Puzzles

1. Write words on index cards. Draw or glue pictures on envelopes to match the word inside the envelope.
2. Have children cut apart each word, letter by letter, in a zig-zag pattern to make puzzle pieces. Have them place words together while blending the phonemes aloud. Store puzzle pieces in matching envelopes.

Phonics –Letter Recognition

Play Dough or Sand Letters

1. Provide student with target letters of the alphabet.
2. Student forms letter on top using play dough or writes the letter in sand. Say the letter as forming and tracing with finger.

Phonics - Letter Recognition

Which Letter Am I?

1. Prepare a cassette tape with spoken letter names.
2. Student listens to tape and as he hears a letter, says and writes the letter on a paper or dry erase board.

Phonics – Letter Recognition

Pasta Names

1. Write student name on index card.
2. Supply student with pasta – spaghetti noodles, elbow macaroni- and glue.
3. Student makes the letters in his name with the pasta and glues them under his name on the index card.
4. Student traces the letters with a finger and says each one.

Phonics - Letter-Sound Correspondence

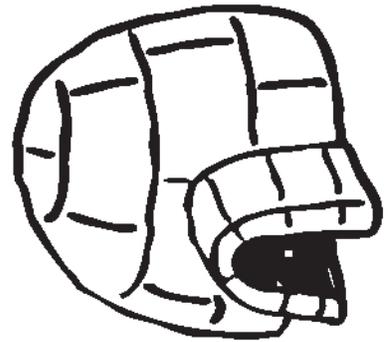
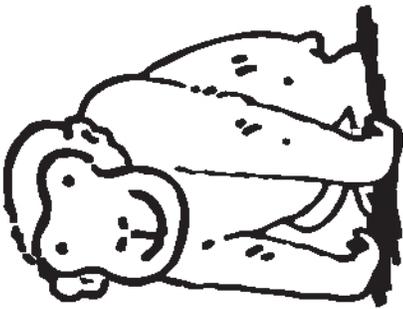
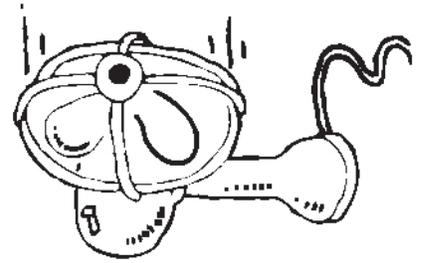
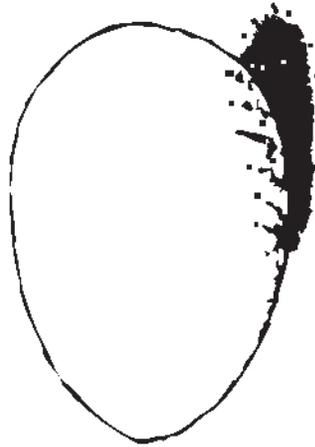
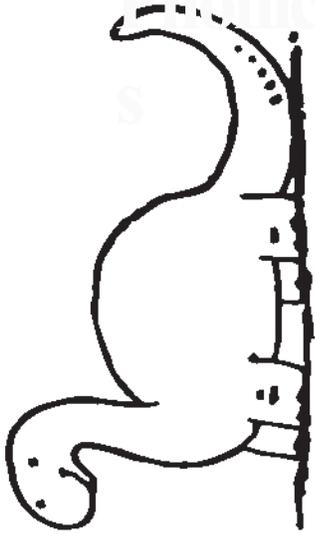
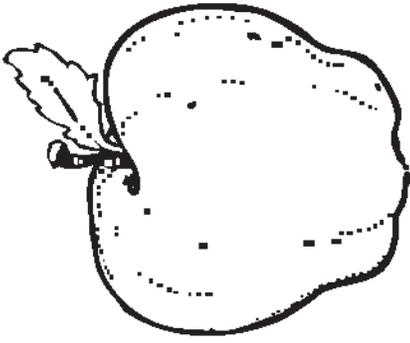
Which Letter Am I?

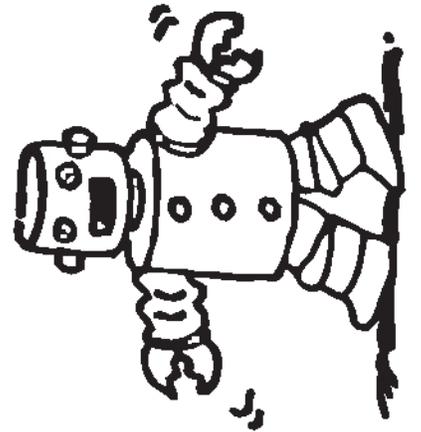
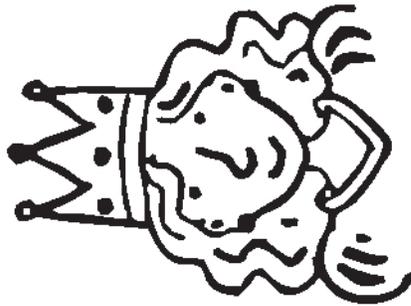
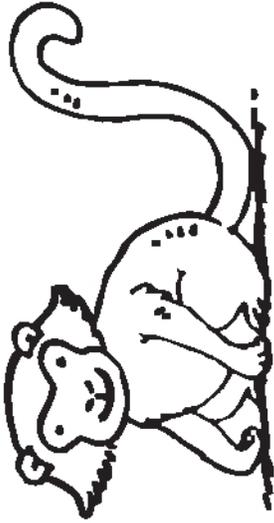
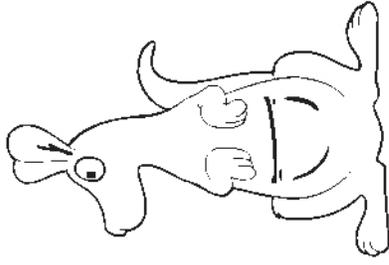
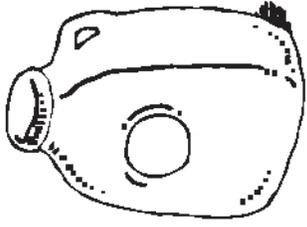
1. Prepare a cassette tape with letter sounds.
2. Student listens to tape and as he hears a letter sound, writes the corresponding letters as he says the letter and sound.

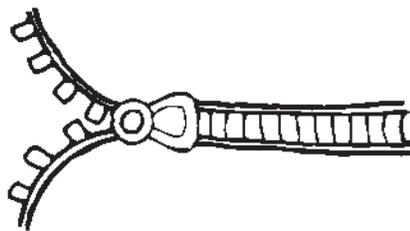
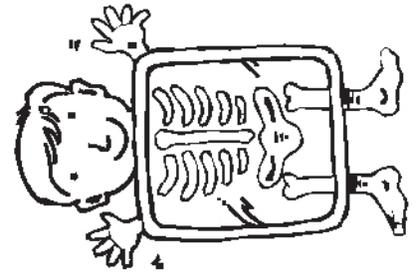
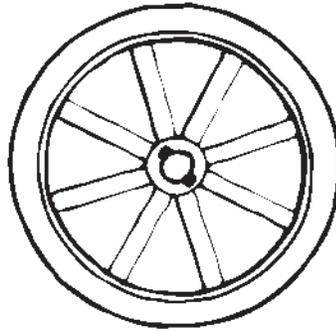
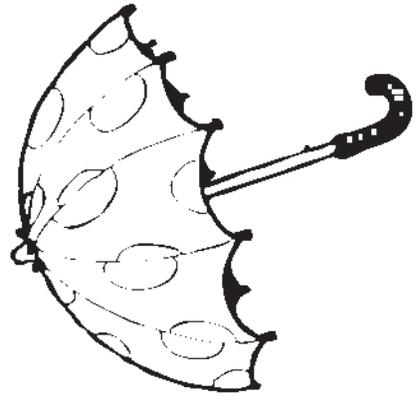
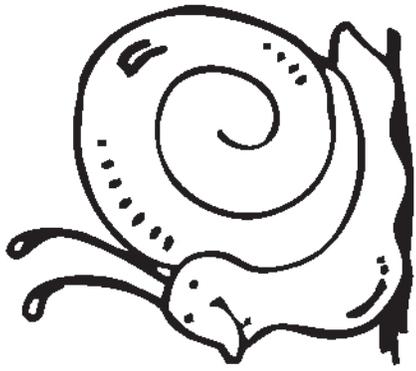
Phonics - Letter-Sound Correspondence – Initial Sound

Brown Bag It

1. Label each of 26 small paper bags with one letter of the alphabet.
2. Student says the name and initial sound of each picture, then sorts pictures by initial sounds into labeled bags.







Phonics - Letter-Sound Correspondence – Initial Sound

Photo Chart

1. Write letters of the alphabet vertically down the left side of a poster board. Prepare photos of students in the classroom.
2. Student will put photos in a pile, selecting one at a time, name the student and say the initial sound in the student's name.
3. Place photos on the chart beside the letter that corresponds to the initial sound.

Phonics - Letter-Sound Correspondence – Initial Sound

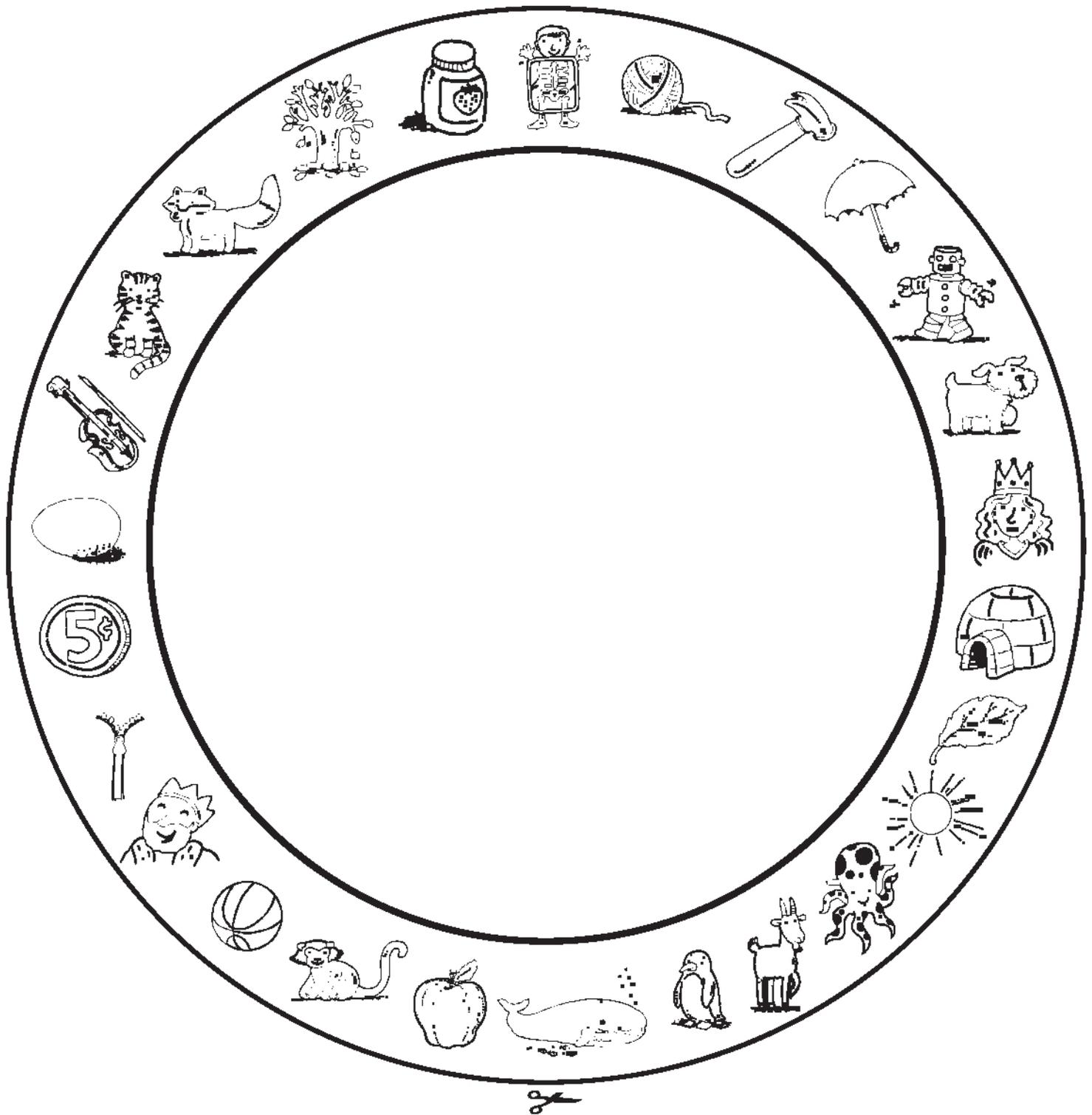
Letter-Sound Placemats

1. Give student a 12" X 18" sheet of construction paper.
2. Student writes or stamps his name on paper.
3. Using print resources (e.g magazine) student selects and glues pictures that begin with the same initial sound as in his name.

Phonics - Letter-Sound Correspondence – Initial Sound

Clip-a-Letter

1. Place the picture circle and clothespins with written letters on a flat surface.
2. Choose a clothespin, say the letter and sound of the letter, match it to the initial sound picture circle.



Phonics - Letter-Sound Correspondence – Final Sound

Letter Bag

1. Determine a target final sound and select some objects that do and do not end with the target sound. Place in brown bag. Prepare copy of student recording sheet.
2. Student selects an object from bag, names the object and says the ending sound. If it matches, student will illustrate the object in target letter column on student recording sheet. If it does not match, illustrate in right column. Write letter for final sound beside illustrated picture.



Phonics - Letter-Sound Correspondence – Final sound

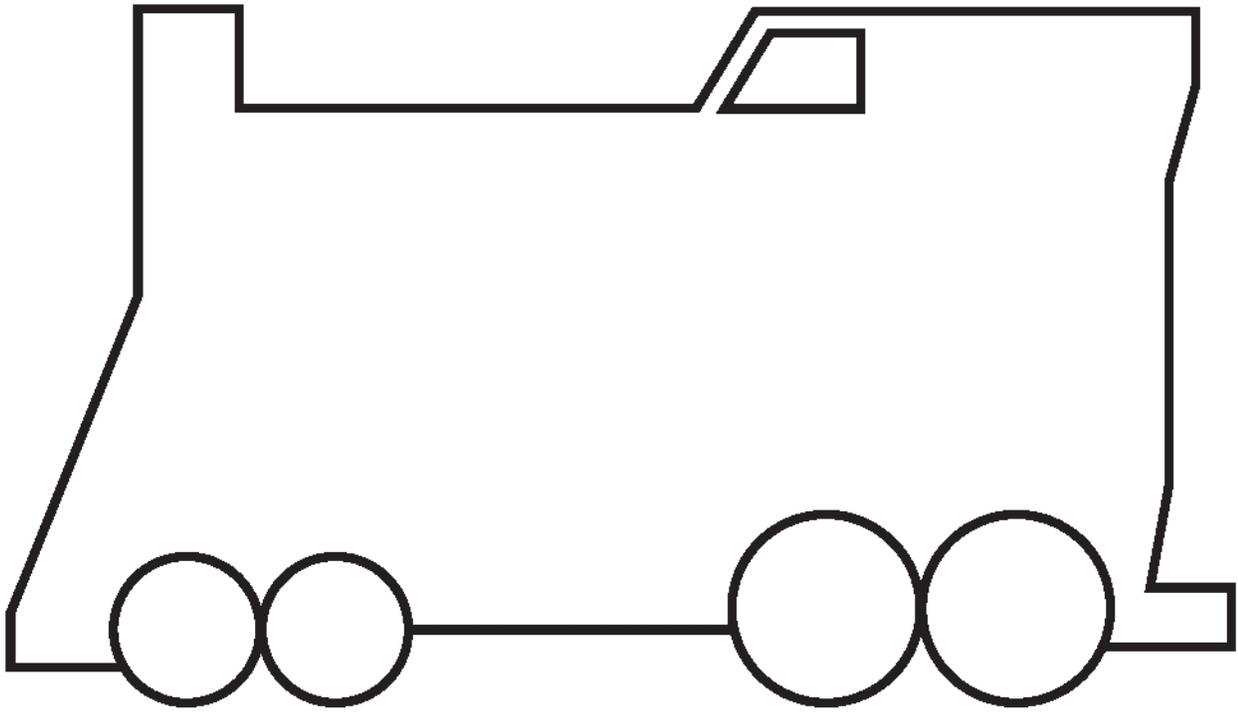
Folder Sort

1. Choose pictures that end with target sounds, choose a few that do not end with either sound.
2. Draw 3 columns on a file folder. Write the 2 target letters in the first two columns and a sad face in the last.
3. Student selects a card and says the picture name and final sound.
4. Look for letter on file folder that corresponds with the final sound and place the final sound picture card below the letter. If it does not end with a target letter, place in sad face column.

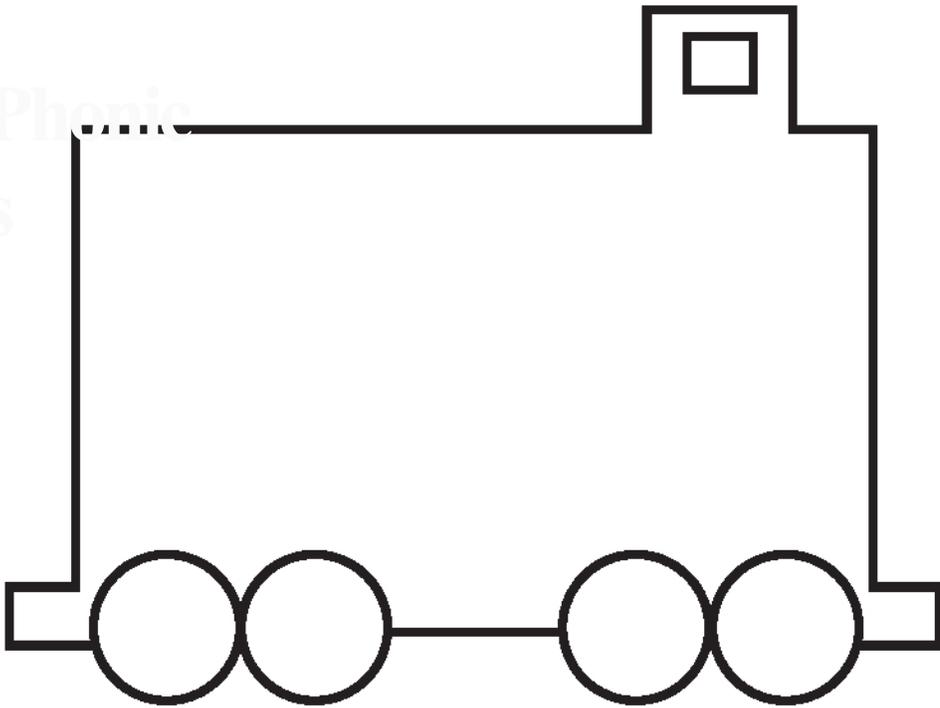
Phonics - Letter-Sound Correspondence – Medial Sound

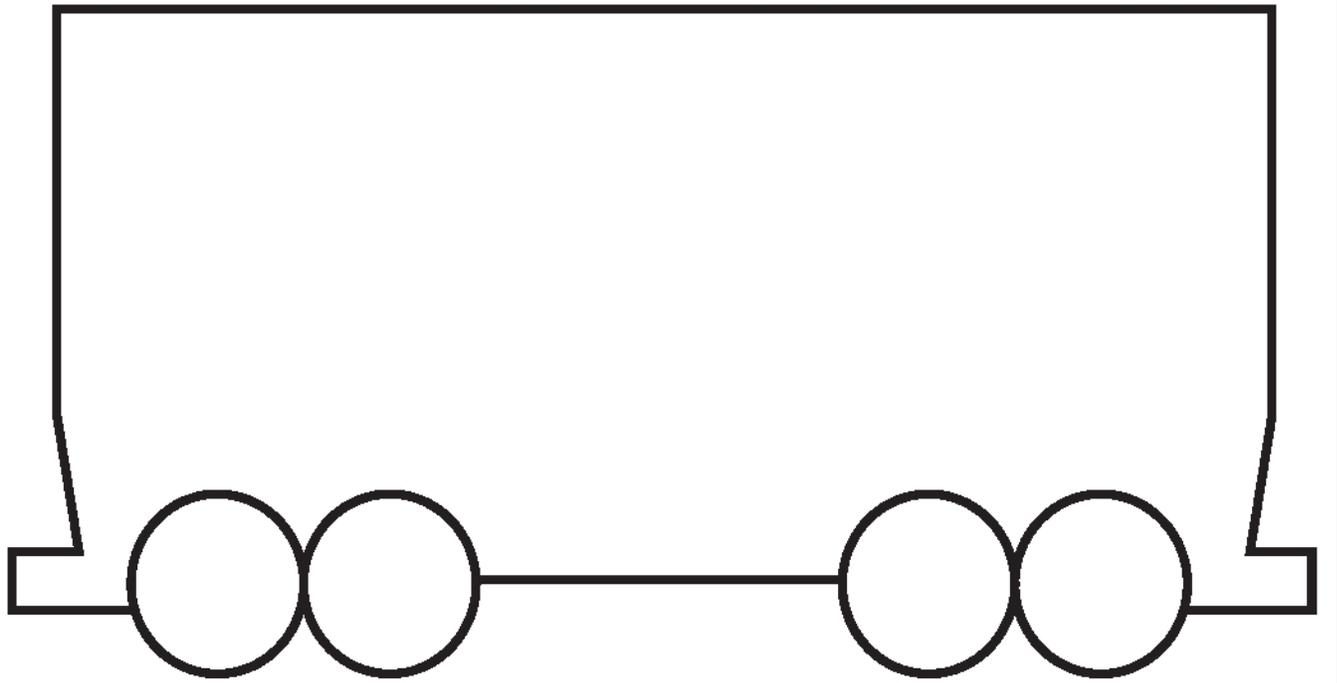
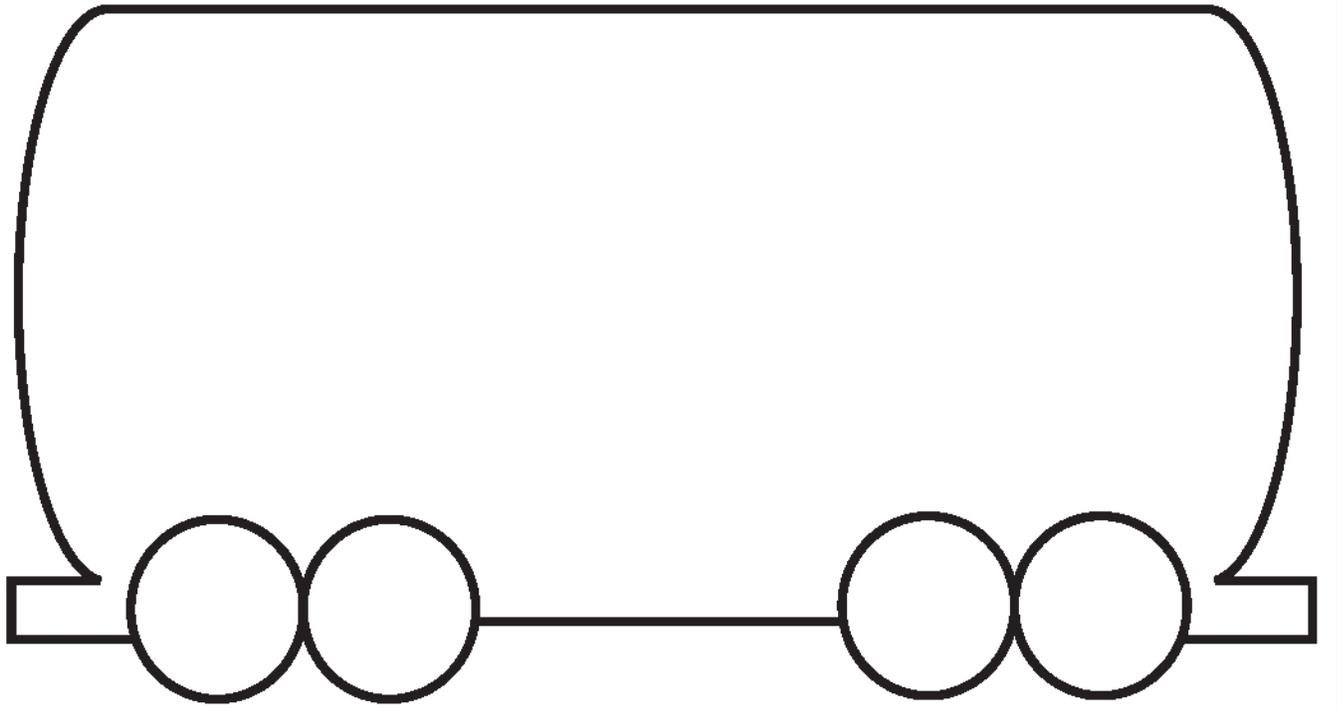
Letter-Sound Train

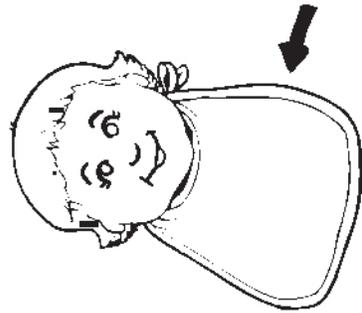
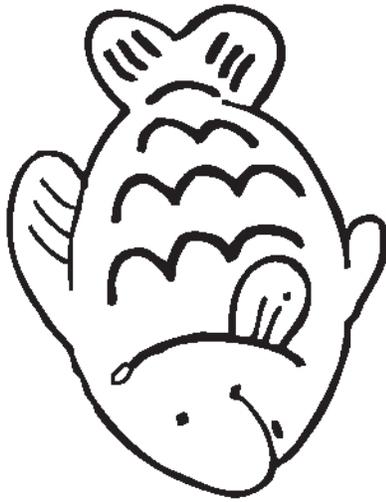
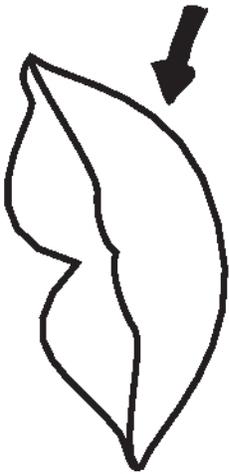
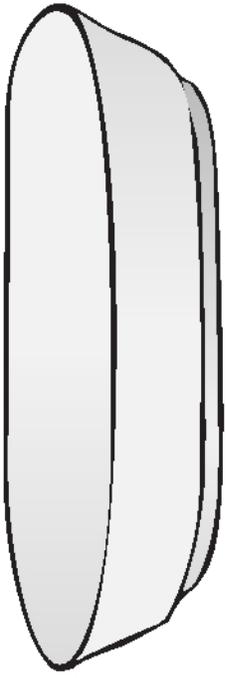
1. Make a train engine, caboose, and six cars.
2. Write “i” on an index card and place on engine.
3. Student places engine, cars, and caboose on flat surface.
4. Place picture cards in a stack. Select a card, say the picture and medial sound. If the medial sound matches the target letter, place the picture on a train car. If it does not match, place on the platform.

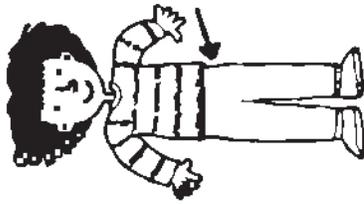
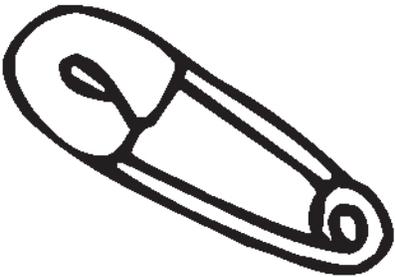
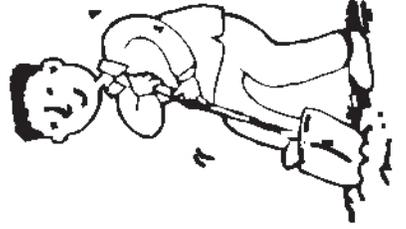
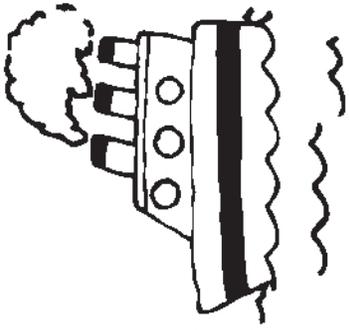


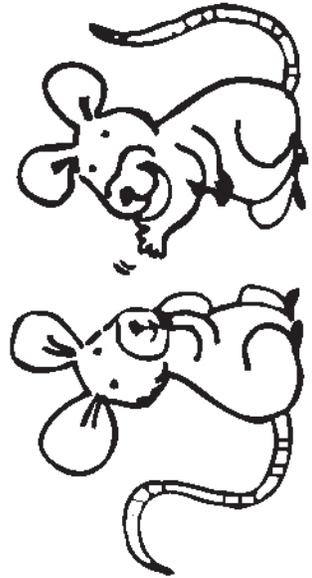
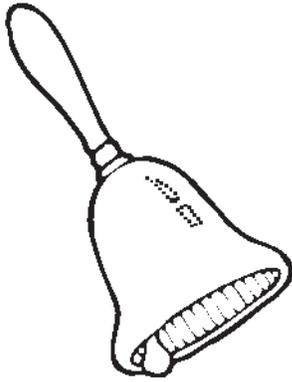
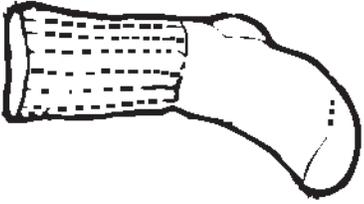
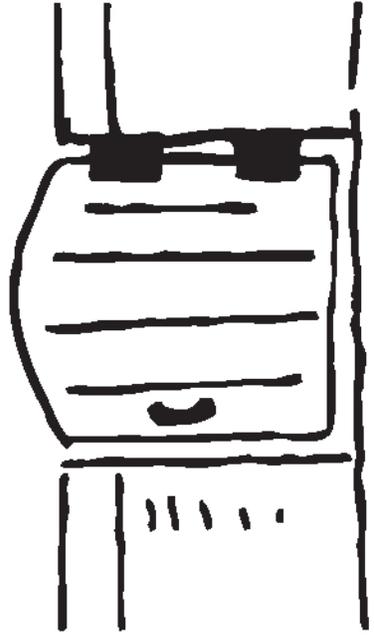
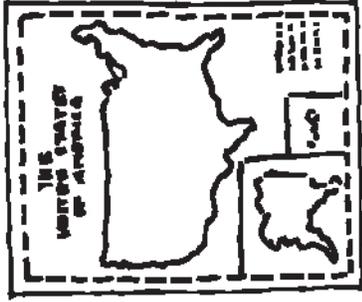
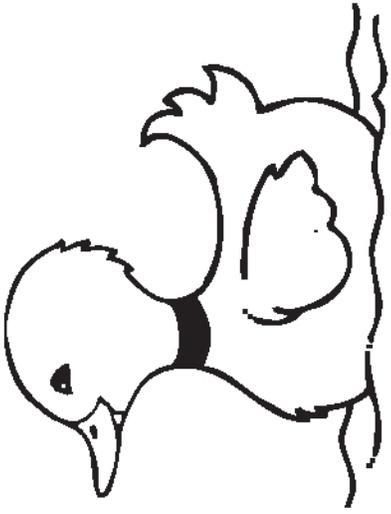
Phonic
S











Phonics - Letter-Sound Correspondence – Medial Sound

Medial Vowel Sort

1. Place vowel cards in a row.
2. Stack picture cards. Select a card, say the picture name, and the medial vowel.
3. Place the picture card under the corresponding medial vowel.

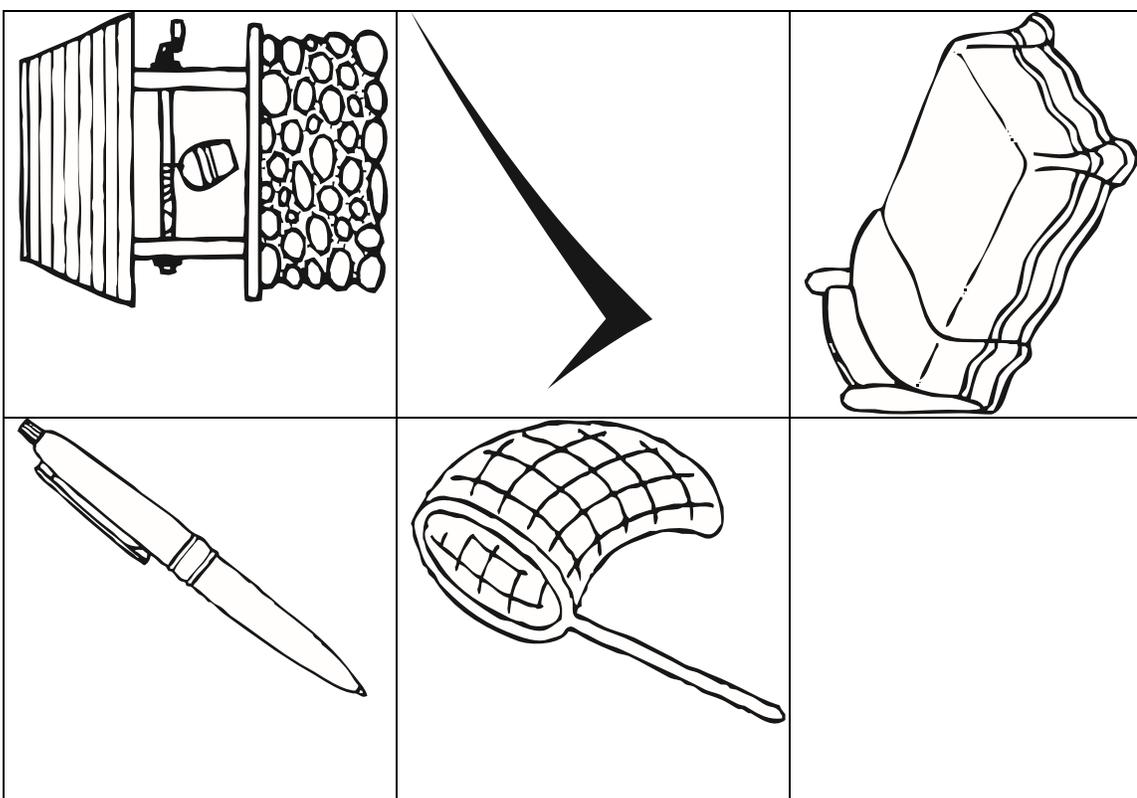
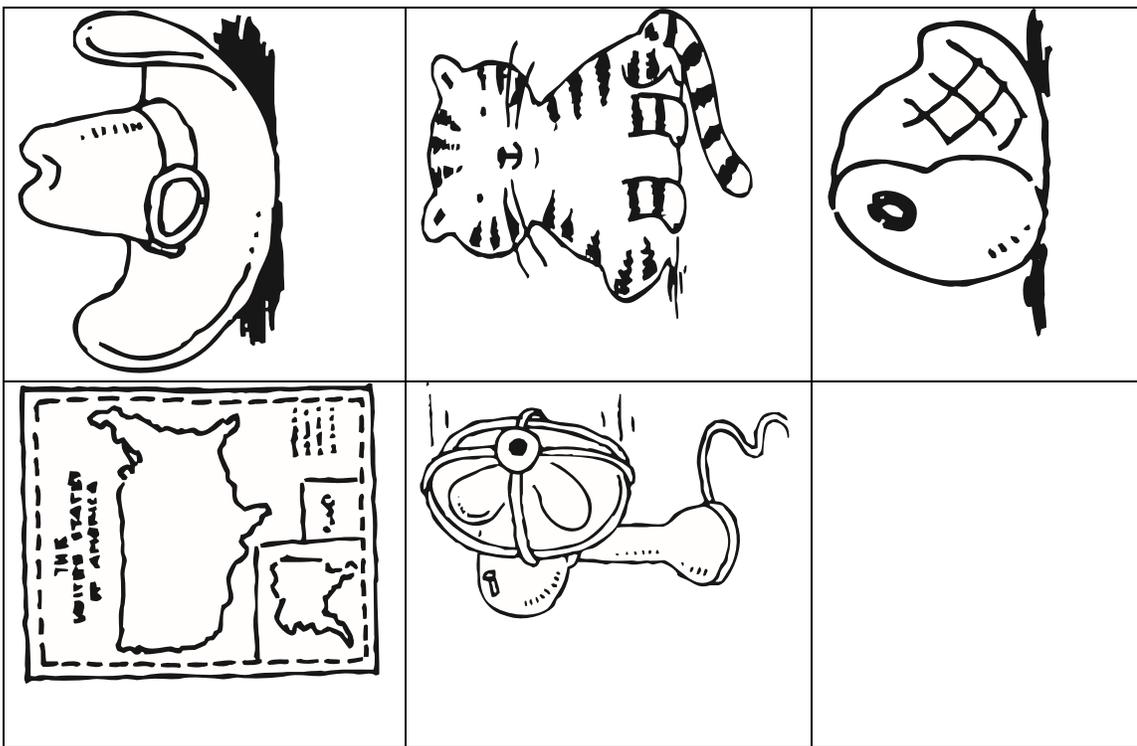
a

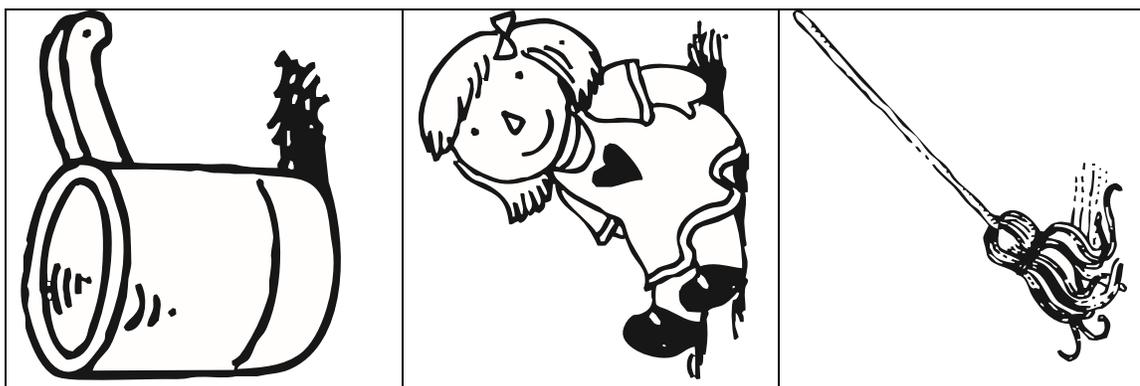
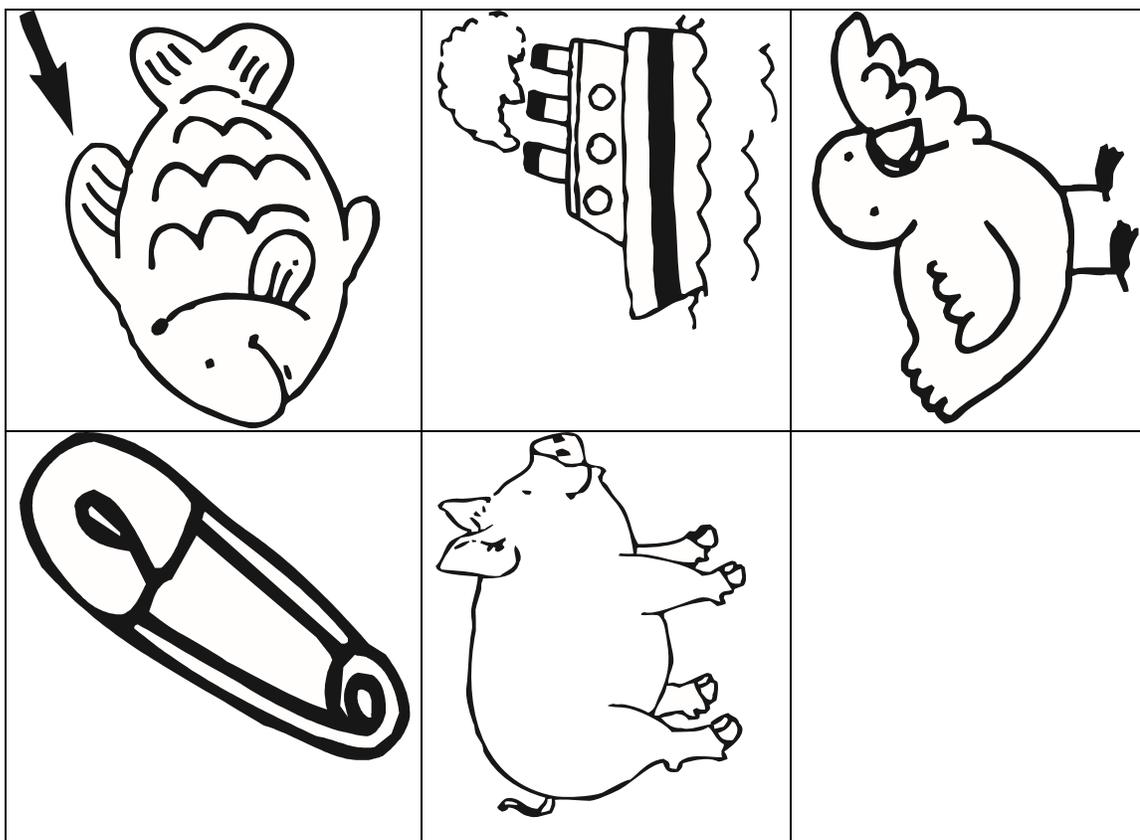
e

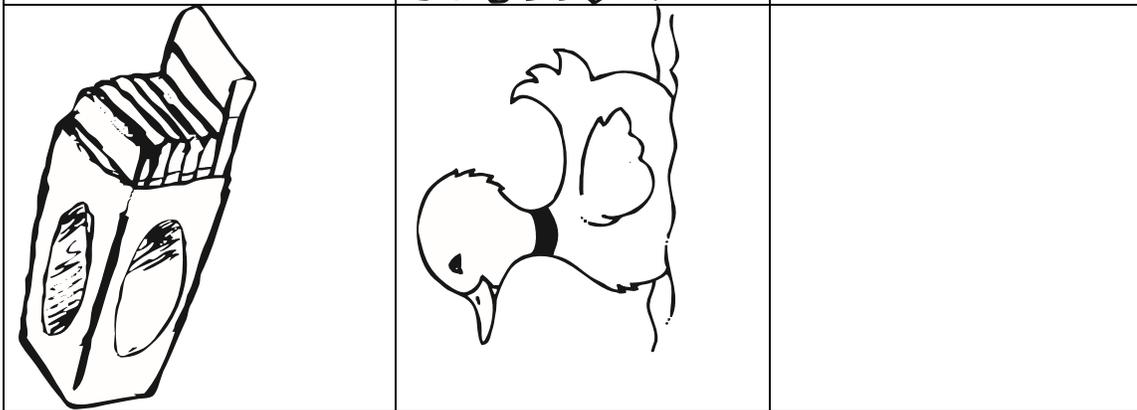
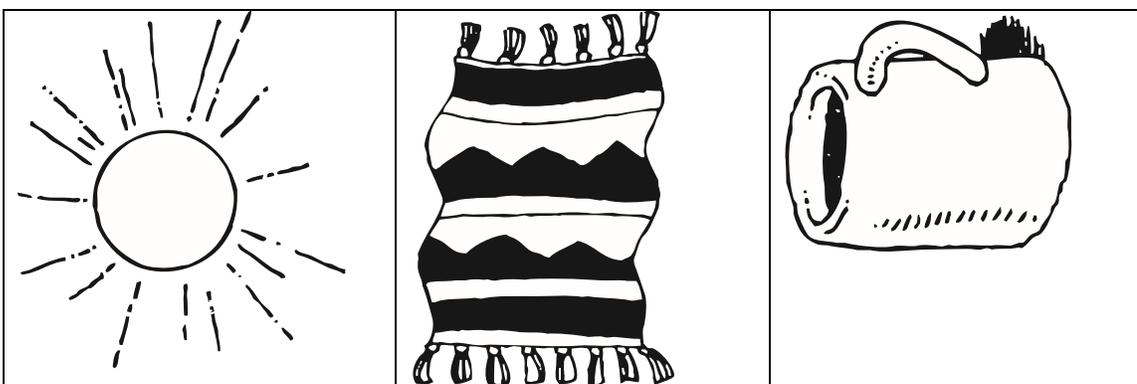
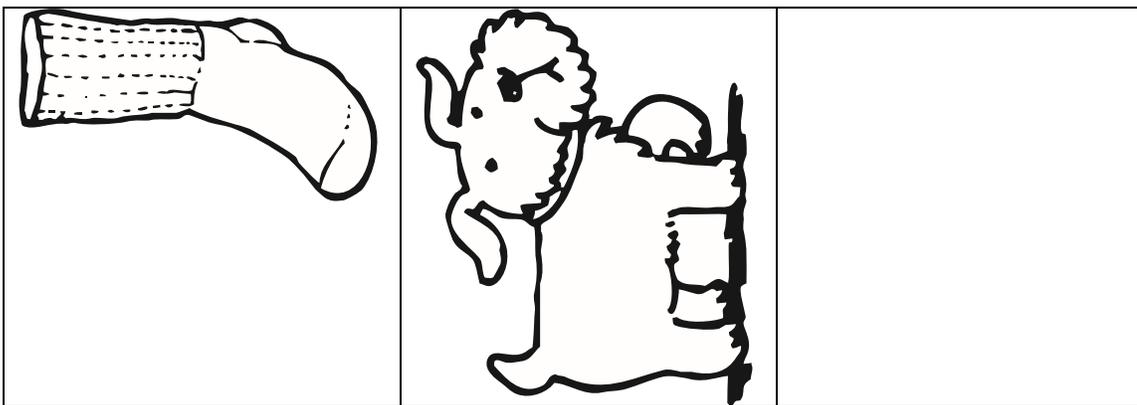
i

o

u

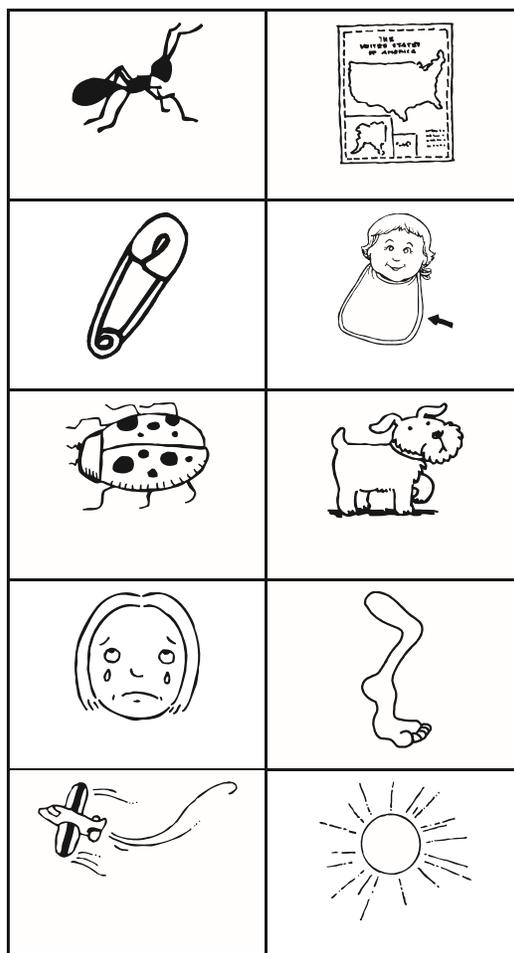






Phonics - Letter/Sound Correspondence – Initial/Medial/Final

1. Provide student with picture and recording sheet.
2. Student cuts out pictures. Selects a picture, names it, and says each sound in the word.
3. Student looks for the letters that corresponds to two of the sounds.
4. Student glues the picture in the fourth column. Looks at the blank space in the row, determining the missing sound and writes the corresponding letter.



| | | | |
|---|---|---|---------|
| m | | p | picture |
| | i | n | picture |
| b | u | | picture |
| a | | t | picture |
| b | i | | picture |
| s | u | | picture |
| c | | y | picture |
| | e | g | picture |
| f | | y | picture |
| | o | g | picture |

Phonics - Onset and Rime

Say it Now

1. Student places the rime cards face up in a stack. Place the onset cards face up in a row. Place a whiteboard and marker near.
2. Select the top rime card from the stack and read the rime.
3. Select an onset card, name the letter, say its sound, place to the left of the rime card.
4. Blend the onset and rime and read the word.
5. Determine if the word is real, if so write the word on a whiteboard.
6. Make more words with same rime and different onsets.
7. Continue until all rimes are used.

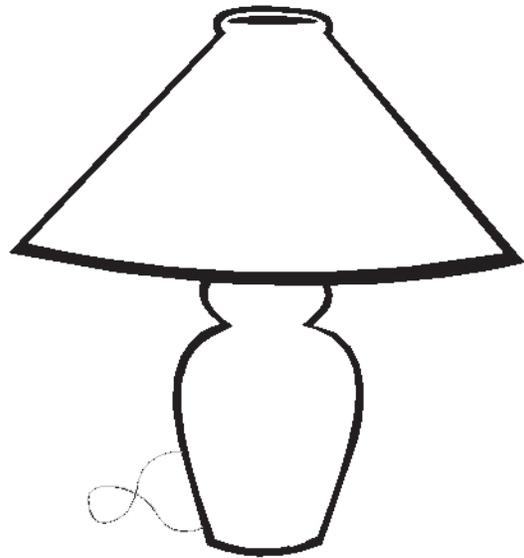
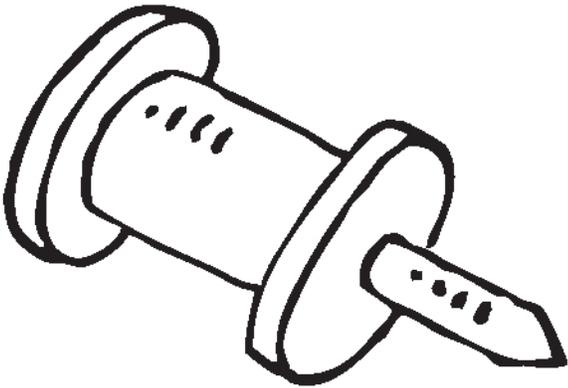
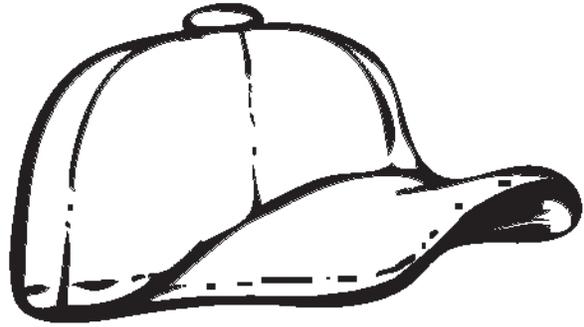
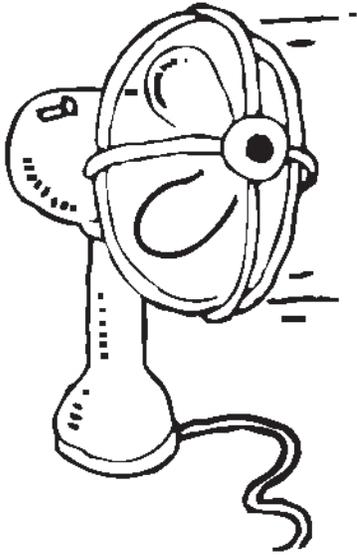
| | |
|------------|-----------|
| ell | an |
| ag | ed |
| ot | ip |

| | | | |
|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| m | s | r | b |
| t | n | c | w |
| h | p | l | d |

Phonics - Onset and Rime

Rime Closed Sort

1. Student places the picture header cards across the top of a pocket chart. Place the word cards face down in a stack.
2. Say each header card, segmenting the onset and rime.
3. Select the top card from the stack, read the word, say its rime, and look for the picture with the matching rime on the top of the pocket chart.
4. Place the card in the corresponding column.
5. Continue until all cards are sorted. Read the words in each column.



| | |
|-------------|-------------|
| man | cap |
| tan | lap |
| can | sap |
| ran | nap |
| plan | trap |

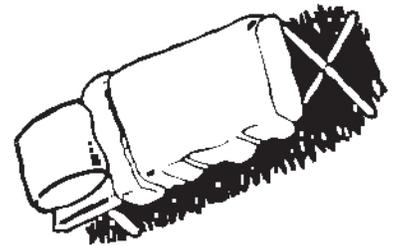
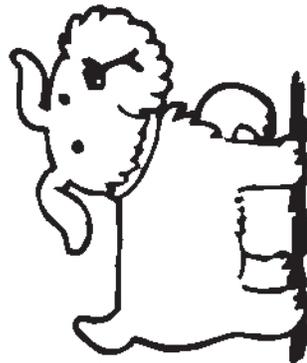
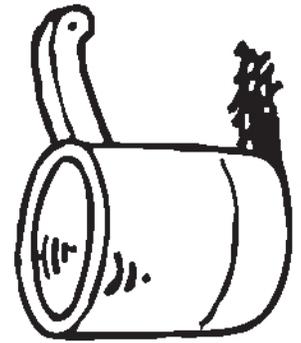
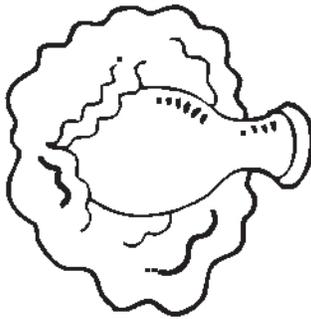
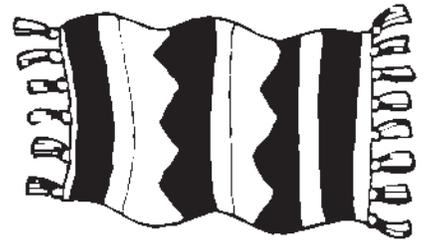
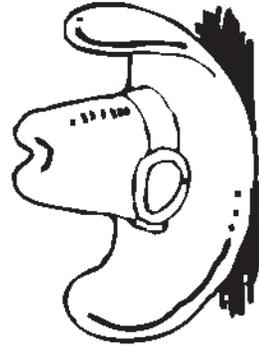
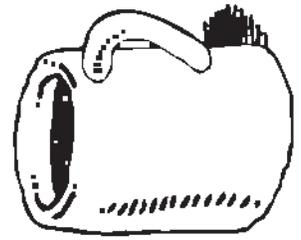
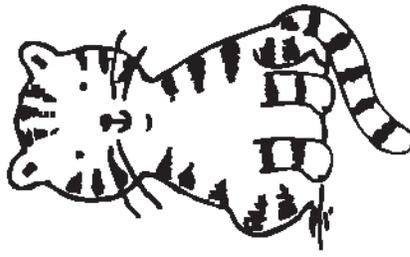
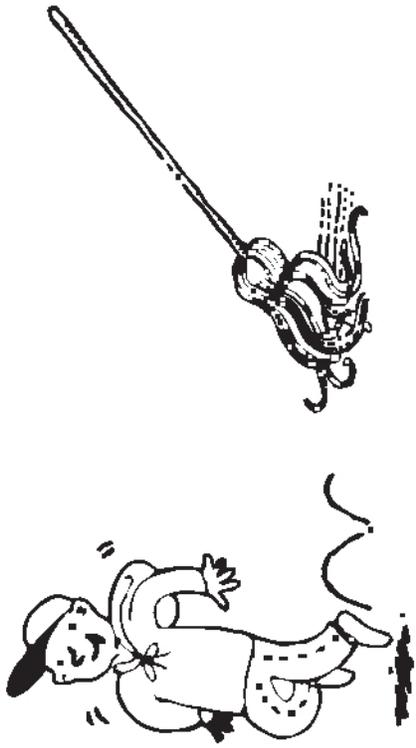
| | |
|--------------|--------------|
| pack | camp |
| rack | ramp |
| sack | damp |
| back | champ |
| track | stamp |

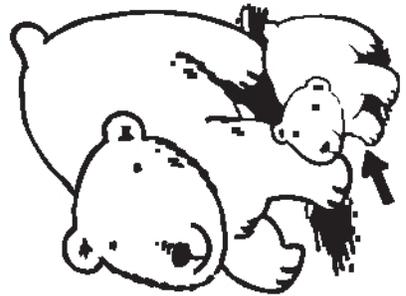
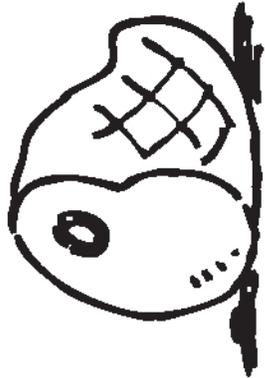
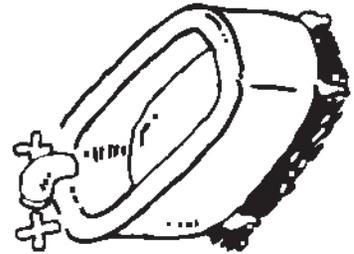
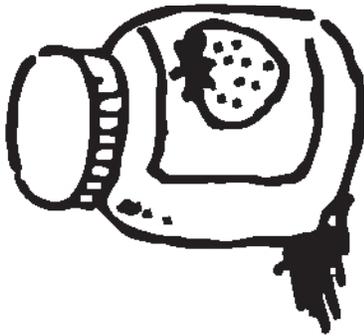
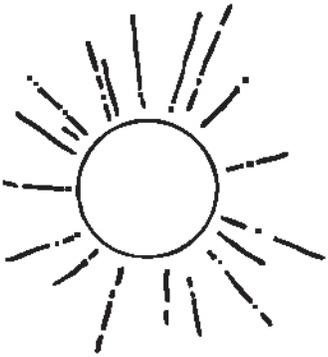
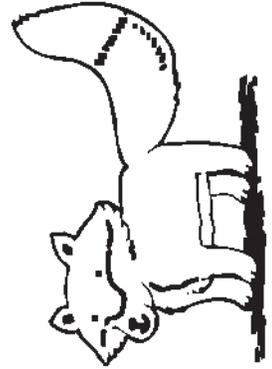
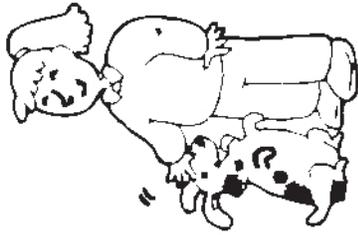
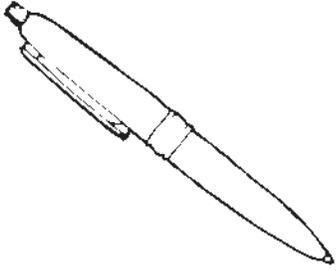
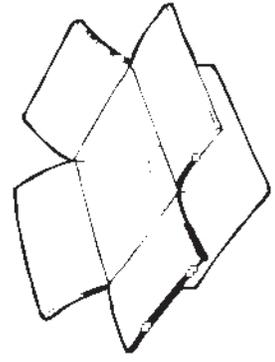
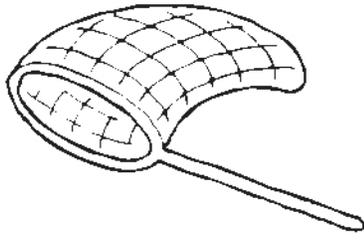
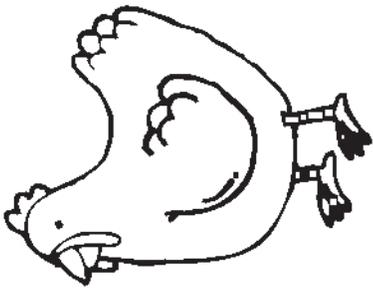
Phonics - Onset and Rime

Change-a-Word

1. Student places the double rime picture cards face down in a stack. Place the onset and rime cards face up in a row.
2. Select a double rime picture card, names the picture on the left side of the card, and segments the onset and rime orally. Choose the onset and rime that corresponds and places them under the picture on the left.
3. Continue the same process with the picture on the right.
4. Read both words.
5. Continue with all double rime picture cards.

| | | | |
|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| b | c | d | f |
| h | j | l | m |
| n | p | r | s |
| t | w | og | ig |
| op | at | en | et |
| ox | un | am | ub |
| ug | ot | | |

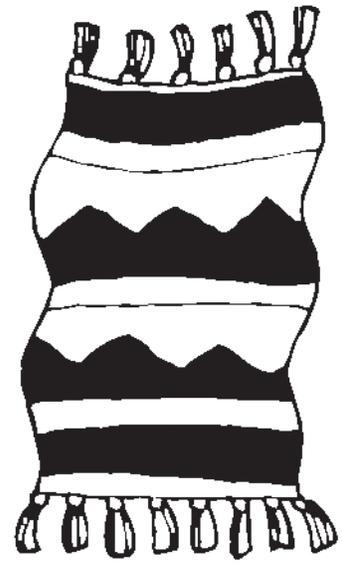
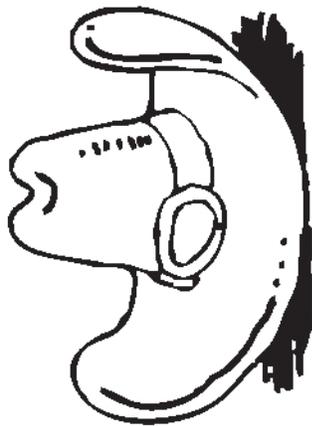
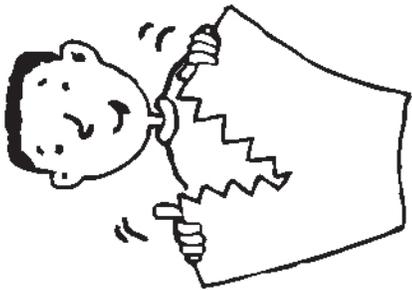
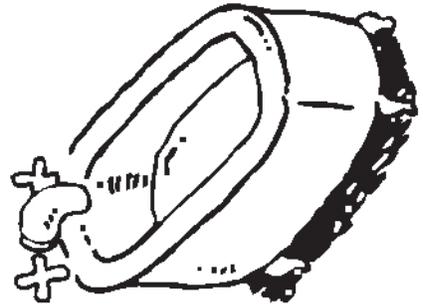
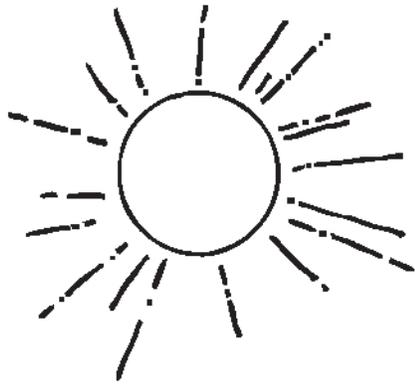
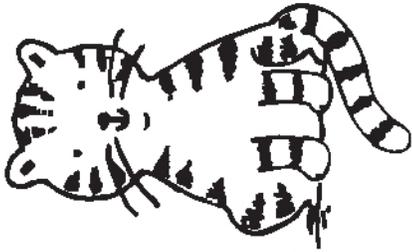




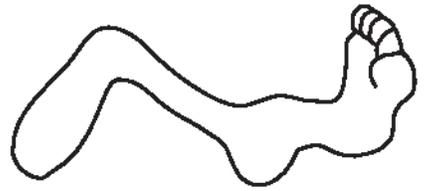
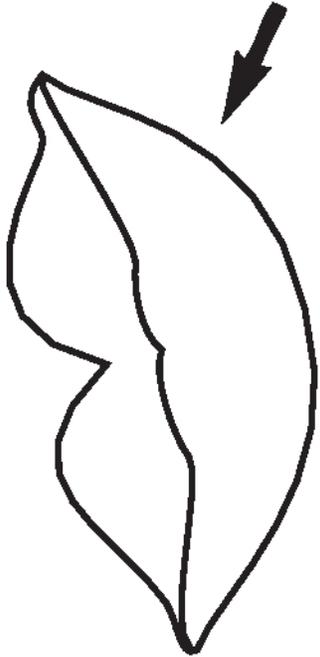
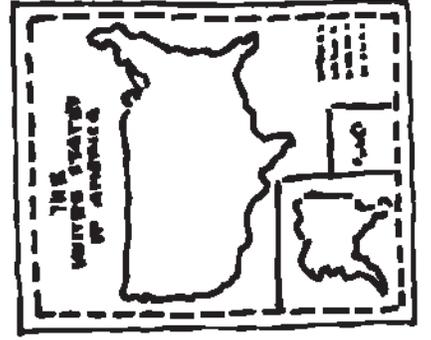
Phonics - Encoding and Decoding

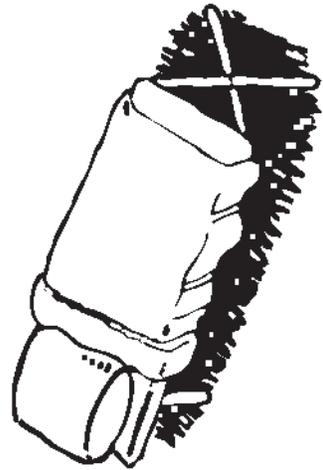
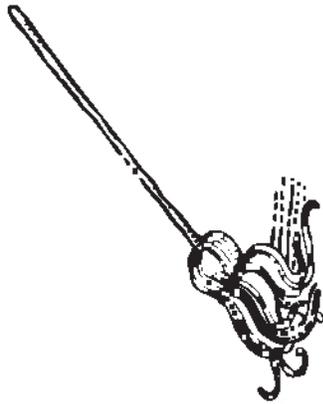
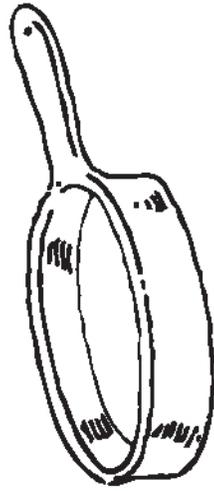
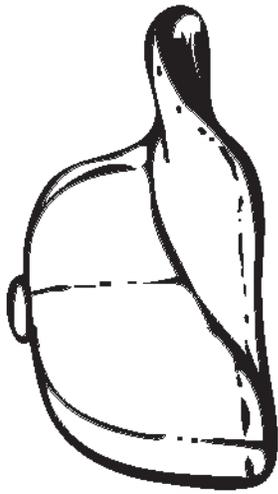
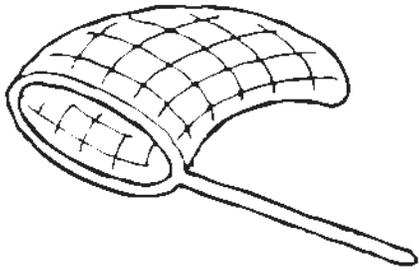
Make-a-Word

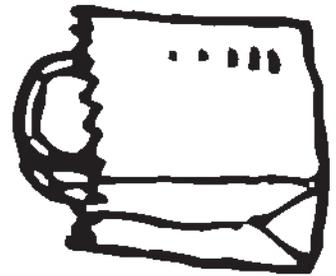
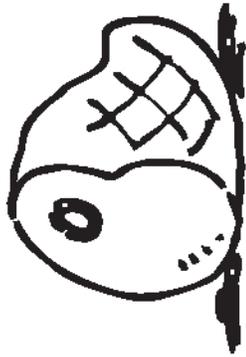
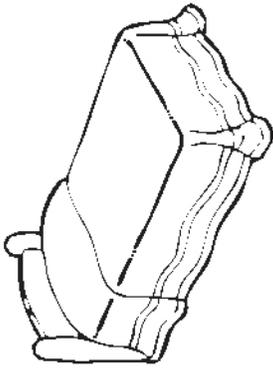
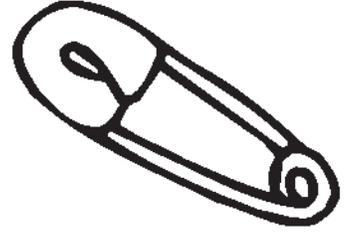
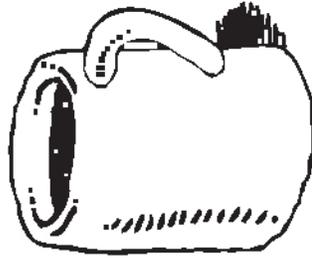
1. Place the picture cards face down in a stack. Place magnetic letters face up in a row. Provide the student with a magnetic board and paper.
2. Student selects the top card from the stack, names it, and segments it into individual phonemes.
3. Select the magnetic letters that correspond to the phonemes, place them in the correct order on the magnetic board.
4. Say the sound of each letter, blends them, and reads the word orally.
5. Records the word on paper.
6. Continue until all words are recorded.



10







Phonics - Encoding and Decoding

Three-In-One

1. Place the consonant cards face down in a stack and the vowel cards face down in another stack. Provide student with a recording sheet.
2. Student selects two cards from the consonant stack and one card from the vowel stack.
3. Place the vowel card between the two consonant cards. Say the sound of each letter, blend them, and read the word.
4. Determine if the word is real or not and record in the corresponding column on the recording sheet. Return cards to the bottom of stack. Proceed with more cards until ten words have been recorded.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| a | b | c |
| d | e | f |
| g | h | i |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| j | k | l |
| m | n | o |
| p | q | r |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| S | t | u |
| V | W | X |
| y | Z | |

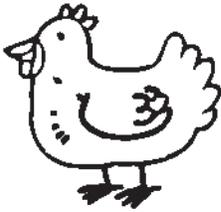
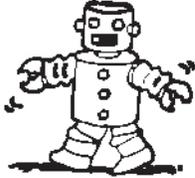
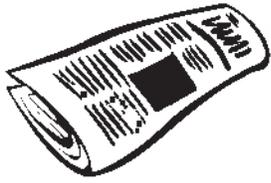
Phonics - Syllable Patterns

Picture It In Syllables

1. Place the syllable cards face down in rows. Provide student with a recording sheet.
2. Student selects two cards, reads the syllable on each card, blends them, and reads the word orally.
3. Determine if the cards makes a word that corresponds to a picture on the recording sheet.
4. If a match is made, set the card aside and record the word next to the picture. If a match is not made, return the words to their original position.
5. Continue until all words are recorded.

| | |
|------------|------------|
| pa | per |
| mon | key |
| ro | bot |
| bas | ket |

| | |
|--------------|-------------|
| ba | by |
| rac | coon |
| chick | en |
| sand | wich |



Phonics - Syllable Patterns

Piece it Together

1. Provide student with puzzle pieces and a sheet of paper.
2. Student combines puzzle pieces with the same number.
3. Say the syllable on each puzzle piece, blend, and read the word.
4. Write the word on the sheet of paper and circle the syllables.
5. Continue until all puzzles are completed, recorded, and syllables circled.

1

ham

mer

1

2

jack

et

2

3

o

pen

3



4

wag

on

s
Phonic⁴

5

pen

cil

5

6

el

bow

6



6

7

pil

low⁷

8

win

dow⁸

9

sham

poos⁹



sand

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wich

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cam

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el

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Phonemic Awareness

Phonemic Awareness Assessment**Rhyme**

A. Ask the child if the following word pairs rhyme.

1. cat/hat _____ (yes)
2. pig/wig _____ (yes)
3. box/lip _____ (no)
4. man/mat _____ (no)
5. sun/run _____ (yes)
6. let/leg _____ (no)

B. Say the following rhyming word pairs.

Ask the child to provide another rhyming word.

1. rack, sack _____
2. pop, hop _____
3. wing, king _____
4. goat, coat _____
5. wide, hide _____
6. bake, lake _____

Oral Blending

**E. Say the first sound of a word and then the rest of the word.
Have the child say the word as a whole.**

1. /s/...at _____ (sat)
2. /m/...op _____ (mop)
3. /f/...ish _____ (fish)
4. /l/...ock _____ (lock)
5. /t/...ape _____ (tape)
6. /b/...ox _____ (box)

F. Say each word sound by sound. Ask the child to say the word as a whole.

1. /m/ /ē/ _____ (me)
2. /s/ /ā/ _____ (say)
3. /f/ /ē/ /t/ _____ (feet)
4. /s/ /u/ /n/ _____ (sun)
5. /m/ /ā/ /k/ _____ (make)
6. /l/ /ā/ /z/ /ē/ _____ (lazy)

Oral Segmentation

G. Say each word. Ask the child to clap the number of syllables he or she hears in each word.

1. pencil _____ (2)
2. map _____ (1)
3. tomato _____ (3)
4. bookmark _____ (2)
5. elephant _____ (3)
6. rock _____ (1)

H. Say each word. Have the child say the first sound he or she hears in each word.

1. sun _____ (/s/)
2. mop _____ (/m/)
3. leaf _____ (/l/)
4. top _____ (/t/)
5. candle _____ (/k/)
6. yellow _____ (/y/)

I. Say each word. Have the child say the last sound he or she hears in each word.

1. bat _____ (/t/)
2. hop _____ (/p/)

3. red _____ (/d/)

4. take _____ (/k/)

5. glass _____ (/s/)

6. leaf _____ (/f/)

J. Say each word. Have the child say each word sound by sound.

1. see _____ (/s/ /e/)

2. my _____ (/m/ /i /)

3. lake _____ (/l/ /a/ /k/)

4. rain _____ (/r/ /a/ /n/)

5. tub _____ (/t/ /u/ /b/)

6. rocks _____ (/r/ /o/ /k/ /s/)

Phonemic Manipulation

K. Say each word. Have the child say the word without the first sound.

1. sun _____ (un)

2. mat _____ (at)

3. leaf _____ (eaf)

4. ship _____ (ip)

5. bike _____ (ike)

6. stop _____ (top)

K. Say each word. Have the child replace the first sound in the word with /s/.

1. mad _____ (sad)

2. run _____ (sun)

3. cat _____ (sat)

4. pick _____ (sick)

5. hand _____ (sand)

6. chip _____ (sip)

Phonemic Awareness - Rhyming

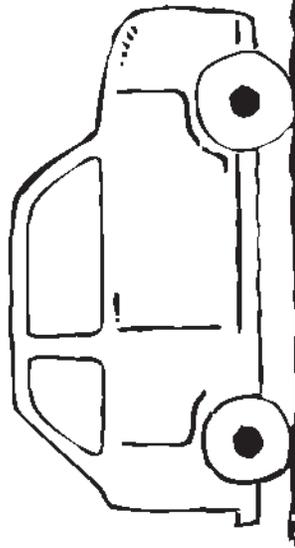
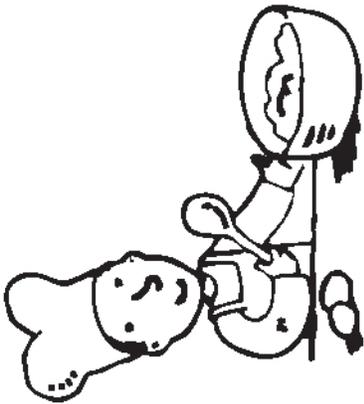
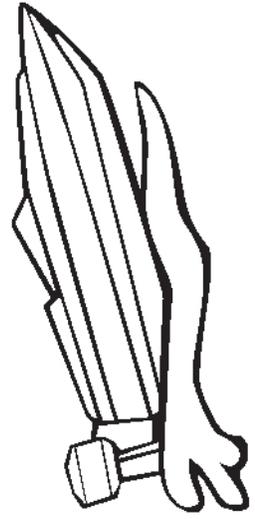
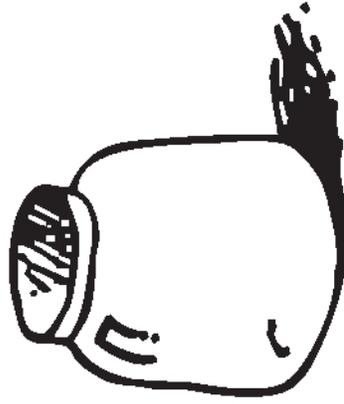
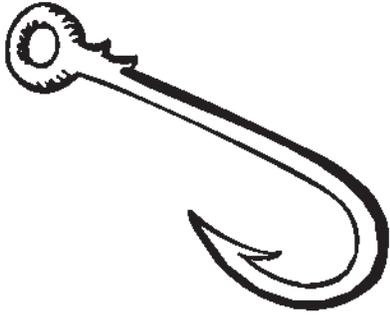
Rhyme Book

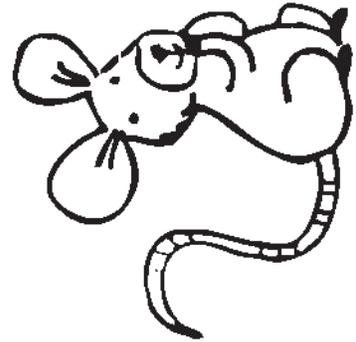
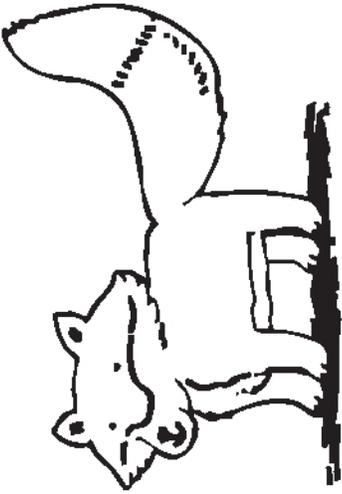
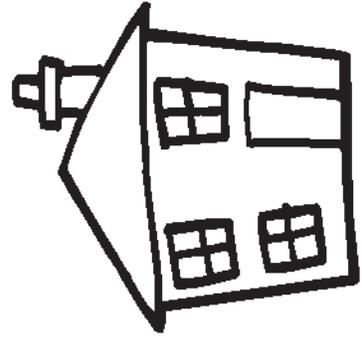
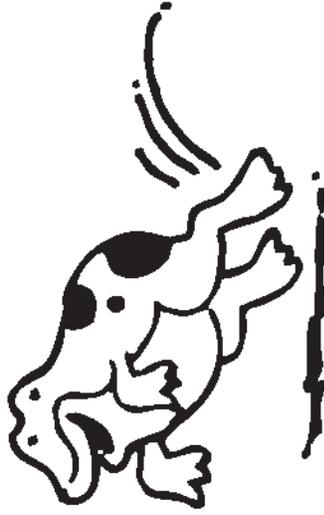
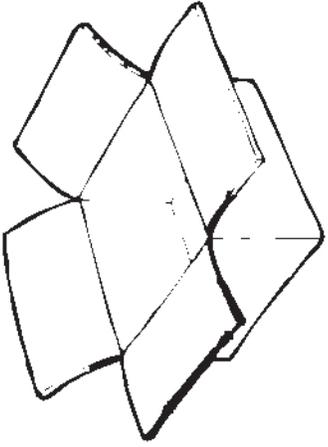
1. Provide student with magazines, sheets of paper, glue, and scissors.
2. Student cuts out pictures that rhyme from magazines. Glue rhyming pairs on one page. Name rhyming pairs.
3. Assemble papers into a book.

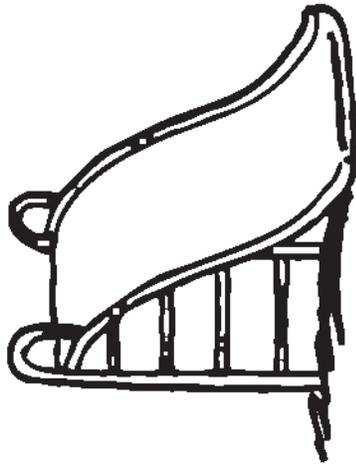
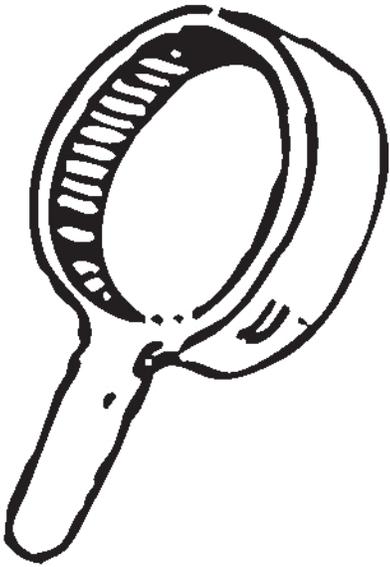
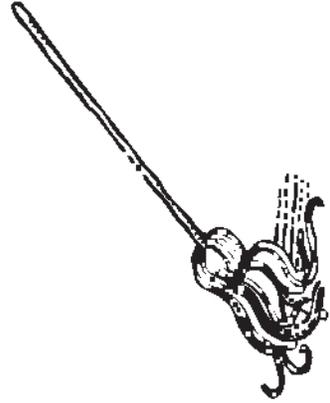
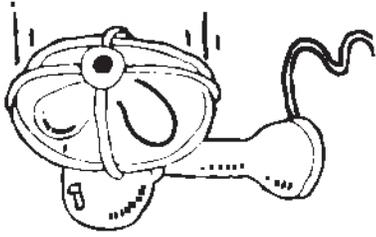
Phonemic Awareness- Rhyming

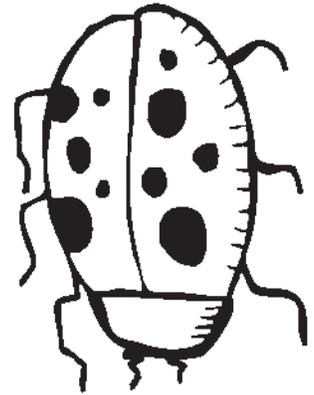
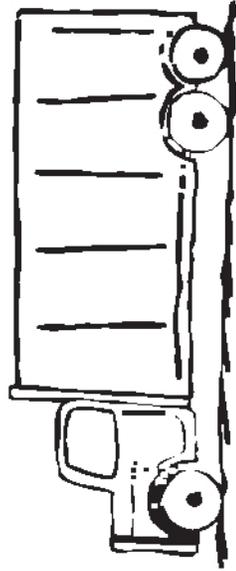
Memory Match

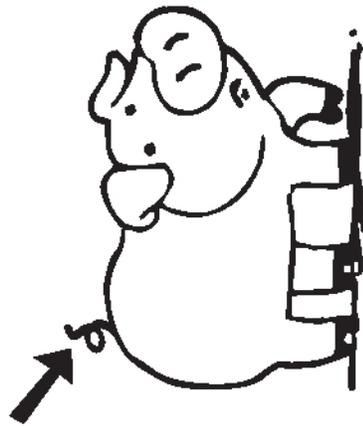
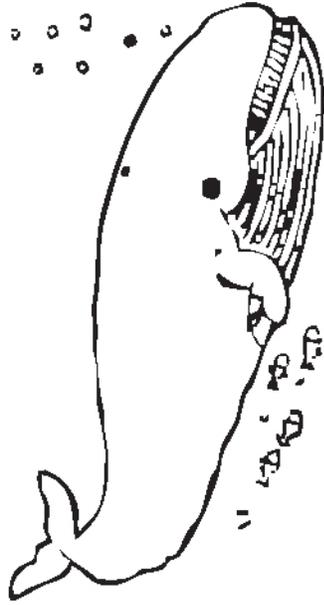
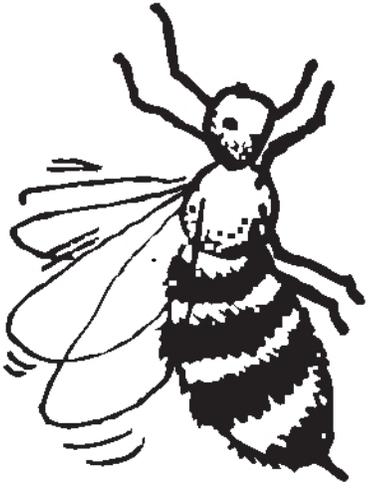
1. Provide student with rhyming picture cards and a sheet of paper.
2. Student lays the cards face down.
3. Select two cards, say the names of each. If they do not rhyme, place them back in their original position and select two more. If they rhyme, illustrate the pair on the paper.
4. Continue until all rhyming pairs are matched and illustrated.









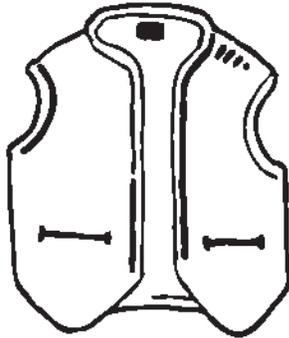
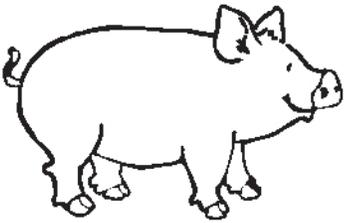
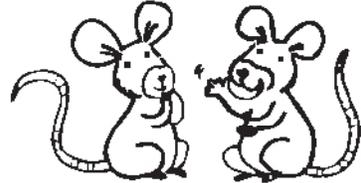
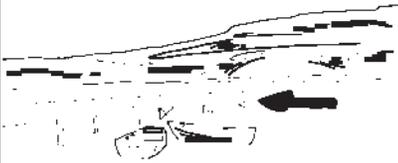
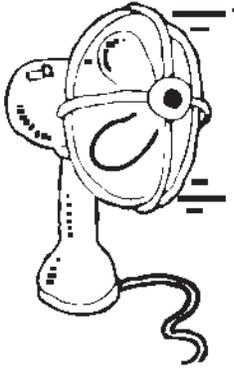


Phonemic Awareness- Rhyming

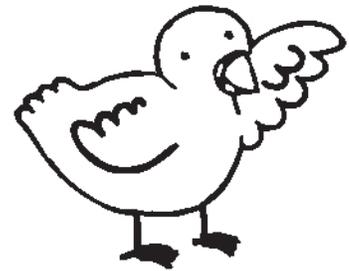
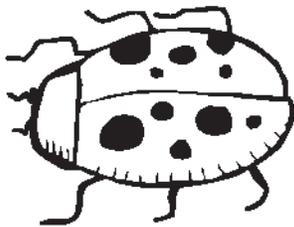
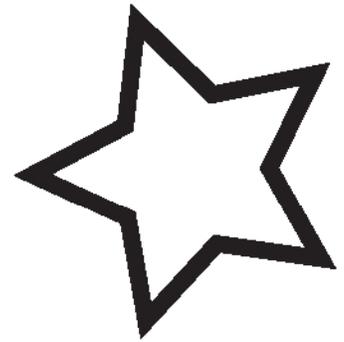
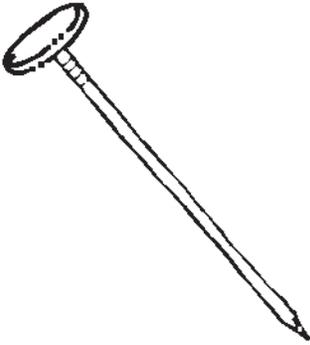
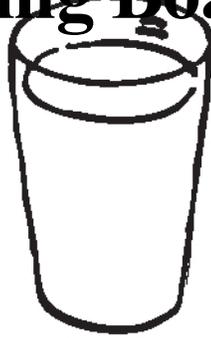
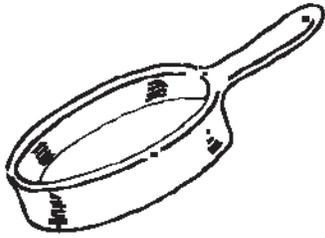
Rhyming Match

1. Provide student with a rhyming board and rhyming pictures.
2. Student places rhyming pictures face down in a stack.
3. Select the top picture from the stack, name it, and look on the rhyming board for a match.
4. If a match is found, say the rhyming words, and place the picture on top of the picture on the board. If there is no match, or if the rhyming picture is already covered, discard the picture card to another stack.
5. Continue until the rhyming board is covered with matches.

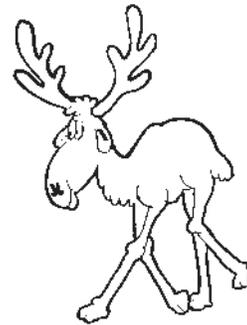
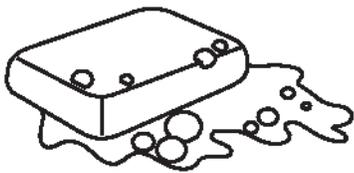
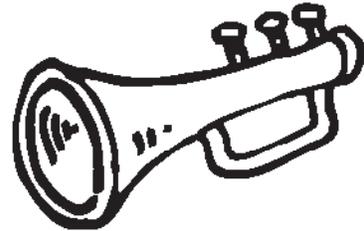
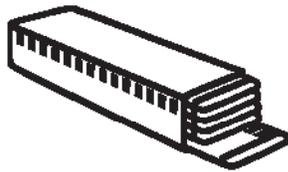
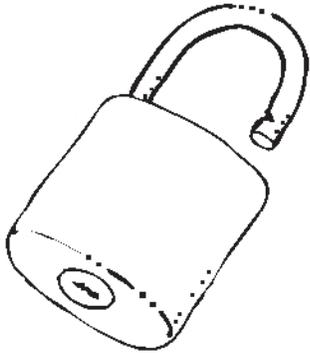
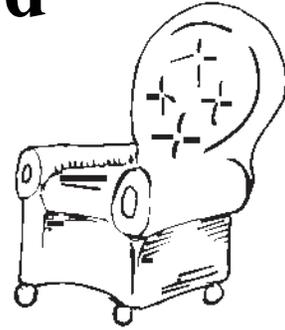
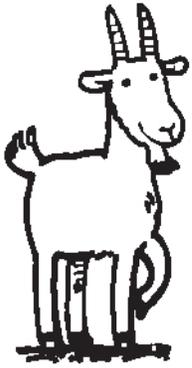
Rhyming Board



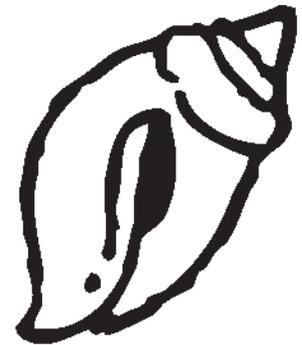
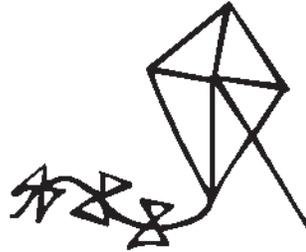
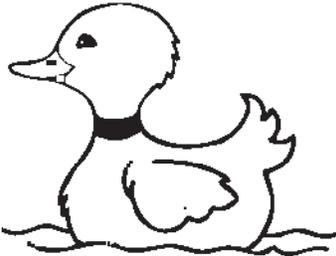
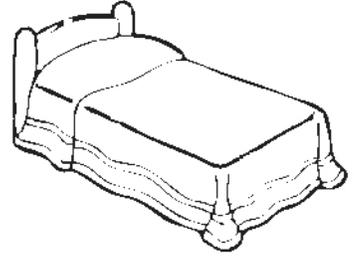
Rhyming Board



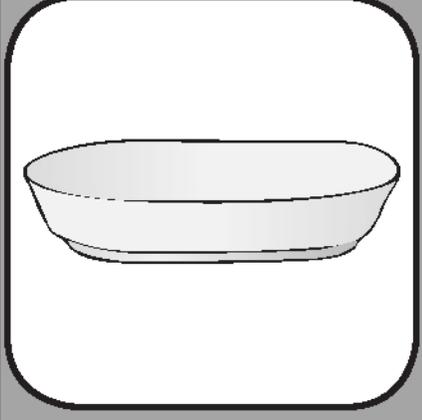
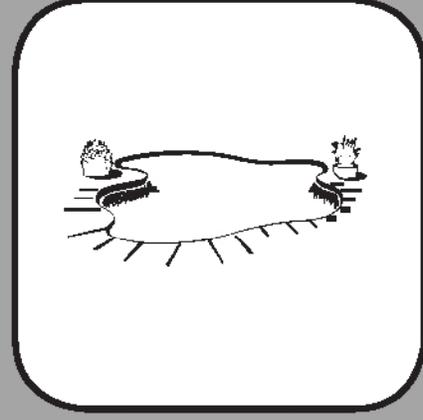
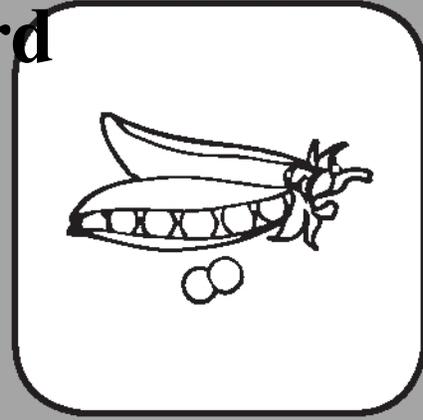
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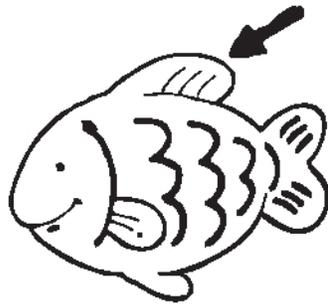
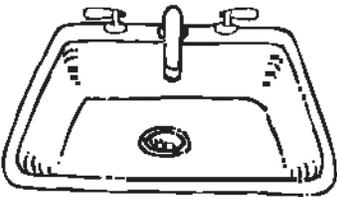
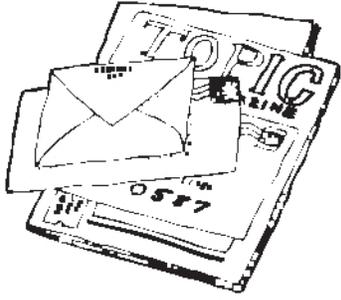
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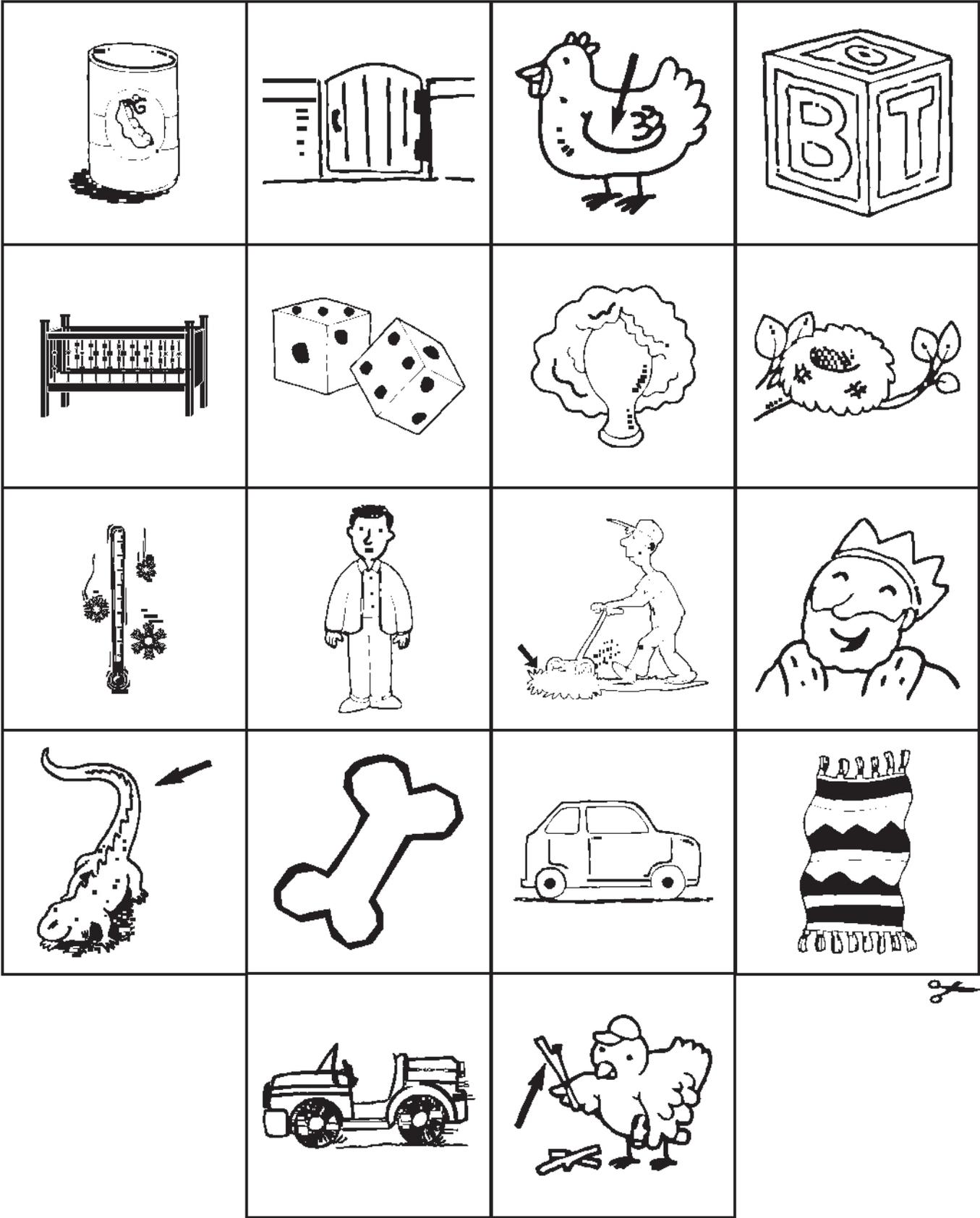
Rhyming Board



Rhyming Board



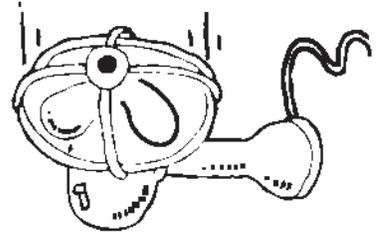
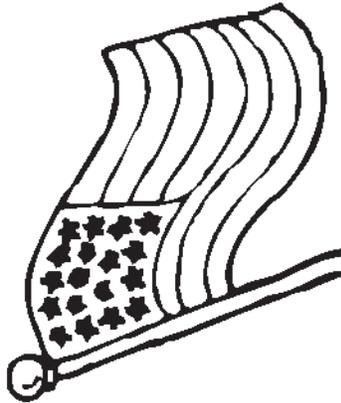
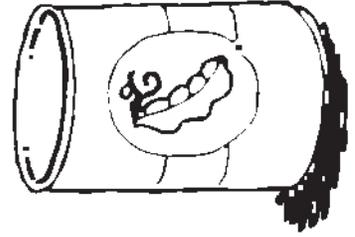
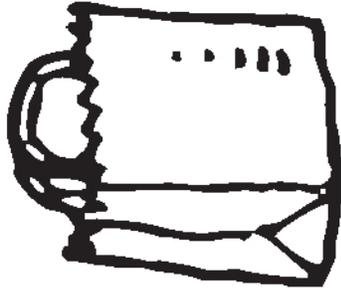


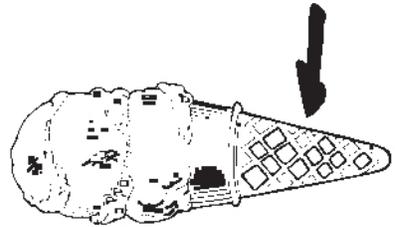
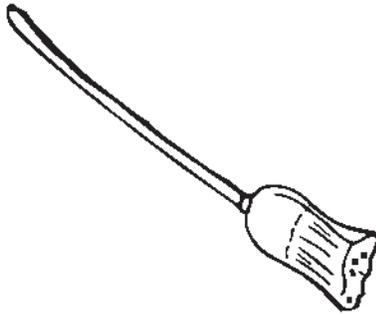
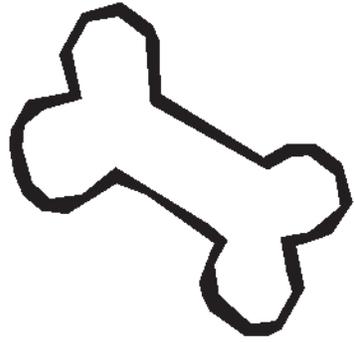
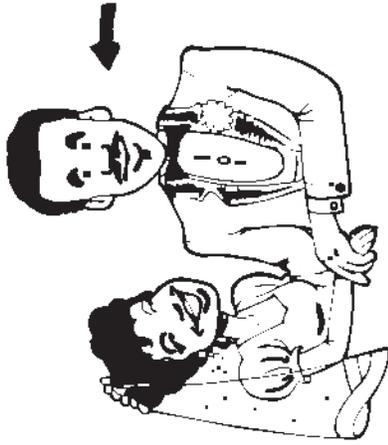
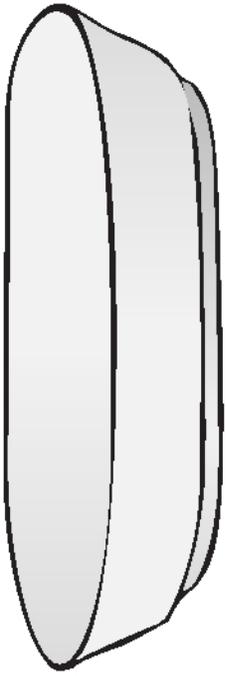


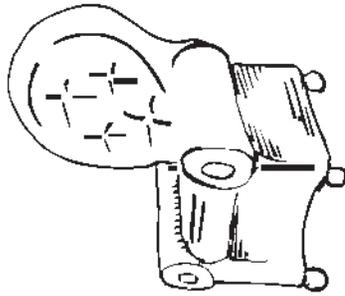
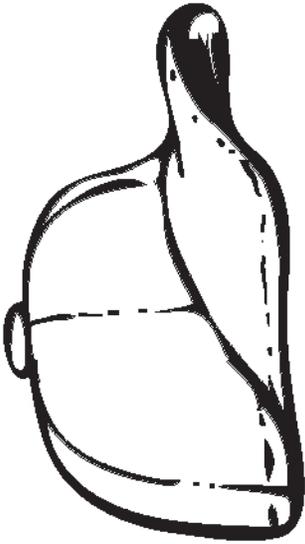
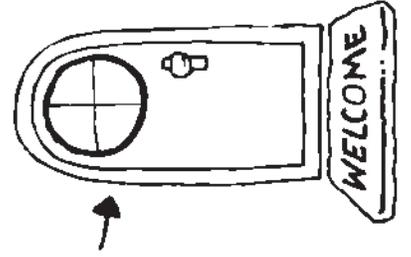
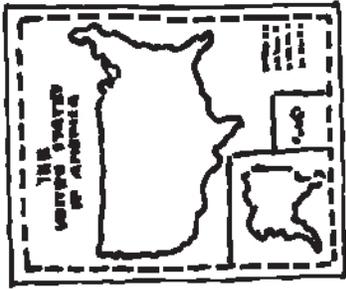
Phonemic Awareness - Rhyming

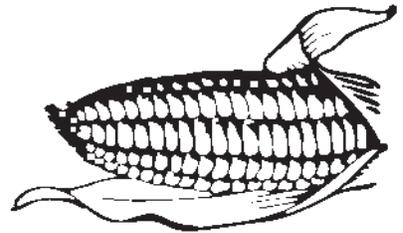
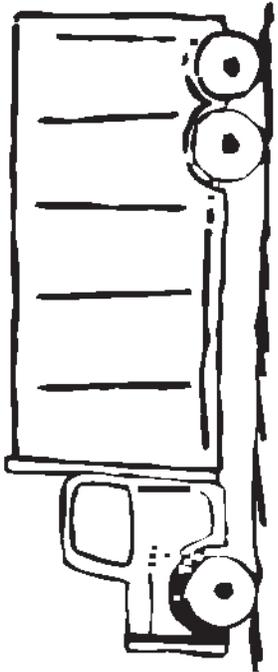
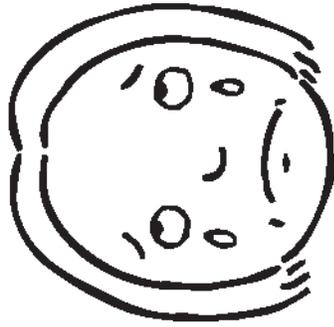
Pocket Chart Rhymes

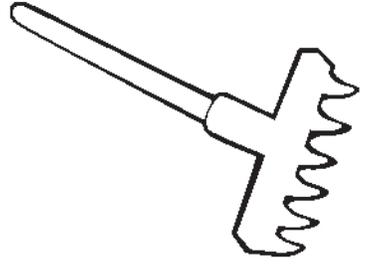
1. Student places the triangle set of picture cards on the pocket chart.
2. Place the circle set of picture cards in a stack.
3. Select a circle picture card from the stack, name the picture, and places it next to the rhyming picture on the pocket chart. Say the name of both rhyming pictures.
4. Continue until all matches are made.

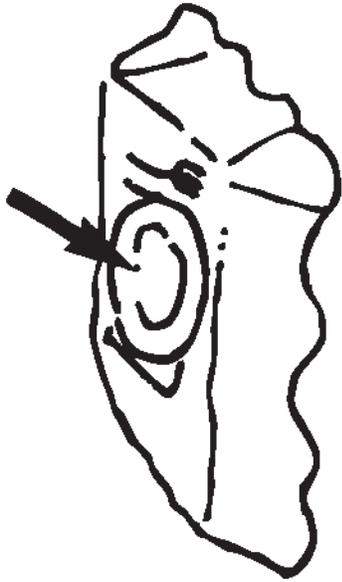
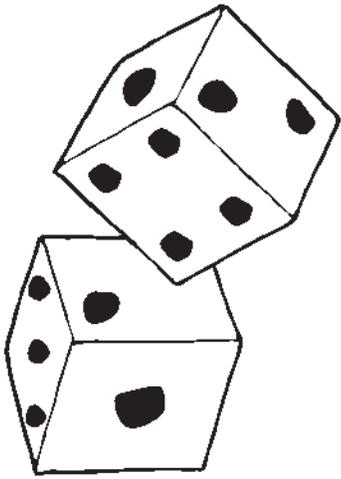
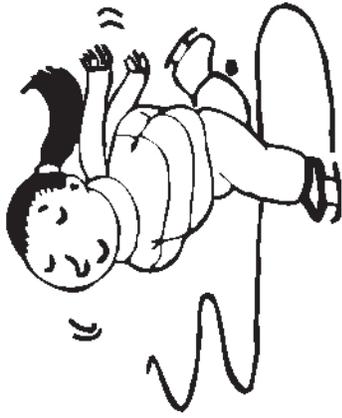
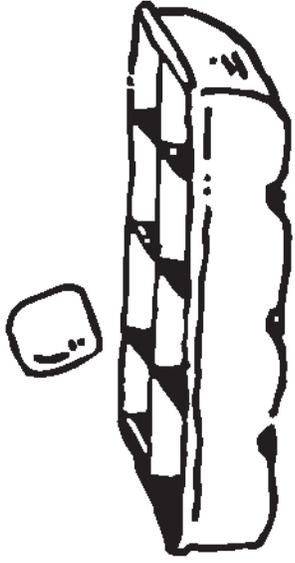












Phonemic Awareness - Sentence Segmentation

Sentence Game

1. Teacher creates a script on tape.
2. Provide student with scripted tape at listening center and a recording sheet.
3. Student listens to the directions on the tape.
4. Listens to the sentence. Listens again while marking one box per word. Listens a third time while checking marks.
5. Continue until student sheet is complete.

Teacher

Script

Preparation:

Record each item and allow time for student to answer, or instruct student to pause the tape before listening to the next sentence.

Note: It is important to say sentences at an even rate; not to emphasize words.

Teacher begins recording:

On your student sheet you will find 12 pictures. I will say "find a picture." You will put your pencil in the first box next to that picture. I will then say a sentence three times. The first time I will say "listen" and you will listen very carefully. Then I will say "mark" and I will repeat the sentence. You will put one "X" in a box for every word I say. The first "X" goes in the box under number 1, the second "X" goes in the box under number 2, and so on. Then I will say "listen and check." I will say the sentence a third time while you check your marks.

Let's try one.

Find the jet. When you find it, put your pencil in the box next to it.

Listen: The jet was very loud.

Mark: The jet was very loud.

Listen and check: The jet was very loud.

Did you make five "X's"?

Now we will begin.

Find the dog.

Listen: The dog is brown with white spots.

Mark: The dog is brown with white spots.

Listen and check: The dog is brown with white spots.

Find the baseball.

Listen: The team ran to the playground to play baseball.

Mark: The team ran to the playground to play baseball.

Listen and check: The team ran to the playground to play baseball.

Find the insect.

Listen: Insects always have three body parts and six legs. Mark: Insects always have three body parts and six legs.

Listen and check: Insects always have three body parts and six legs.

Find the flower.

Listen: Yellow and blue flowers grew in the yard. Mark: Yellow and blue flowers grew in the yard.

Listen and check: Yellow and blue flowers grew in the yard.

Find the clown

.Listen: Clowns wear funny clothes and shoes. Mark: Clowns wear funny clothes and shoes.

Listen and check: Clowns wear funny clothes and shoes.

Find the book.

Listen: She likes to read every night before going to sleep.

Mark: She likes to read every night before going to sleep.

Listen and check: She likes to read every night before going to sleep.

Find the cat.

Listen: The cat jumped over the log.

Mark: The cat jumped over the log.

Listen and check: The cat jumped over the log.

Find the zebra.

Listen: We saw a zebra at the zoo.

Mark: We saw a zebra at the zoo.

Listen and check: We saw a zebra at the zoo.

Find the flag.

Listen: There are fifty stars on the flag.

Mark: There are fifty stars on the flag.

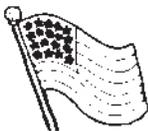
Listen and check: There are fifty stars on the flag.

Find the cake.

Listen: Grandmother will bake a special chocolate cake for my birthday.

Mark: Grandmother will bake a special chocolate cake for my birthday.

Listen and check: Grandmother will bake a special chocolate cake for my birthday.



Phonemic Awareness - Syllables

Clapping Names

1. Glue photos of students in the class to the recording sheet.
2. Provide student with classmate photograph recording sheet.
3. Student looks at each photograph, say the classmate's name, claps the syllables in the name.
4. Say the name again while segmenting each syllable. Make an "X" in each box for every corresponding syllable.
5. Continue until recording sheet is complete.

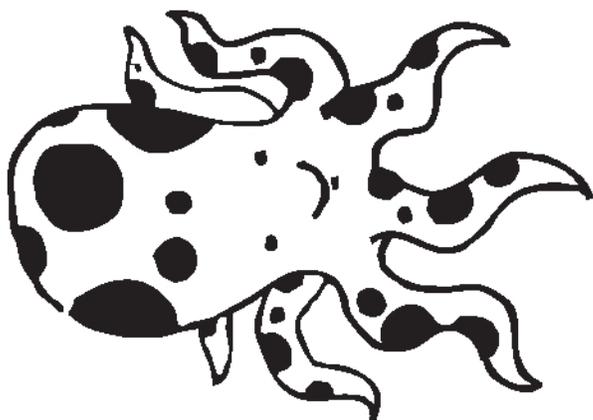
Phonemic Awareness – Syllables

Feed the Animals

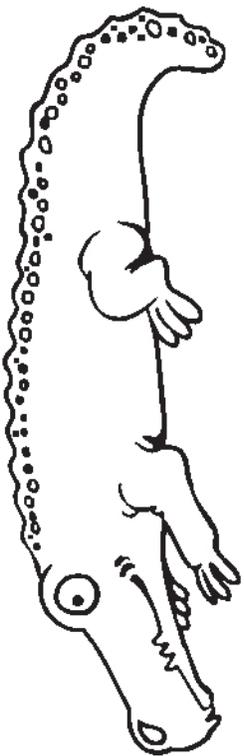
1. Glue animal picture header cards to shoeboxes.
2. Student places the two-to-four syllable cards in a stack. Select the top card, name the picture, and clap the syllables.
3. Feed the picture card to the hungry animal with the same number of syllables (e.g. place the picture of the hamburger in the octopus box).
4. Continue until all picture cards are fed to the hungry animals.



header



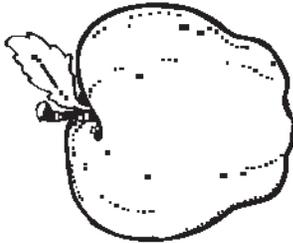
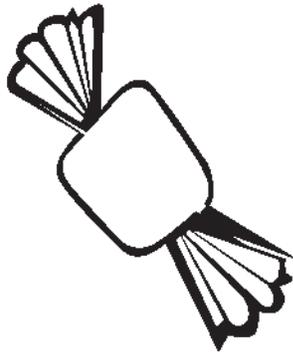
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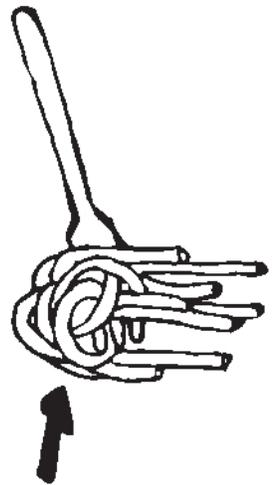
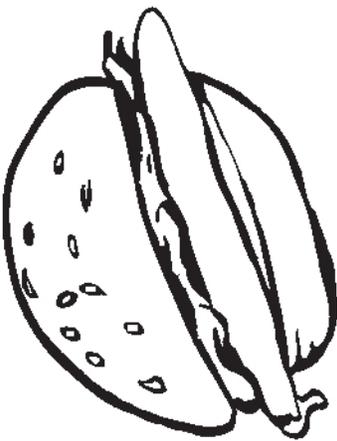
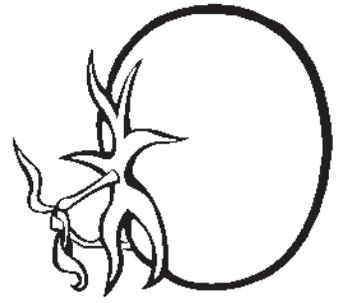
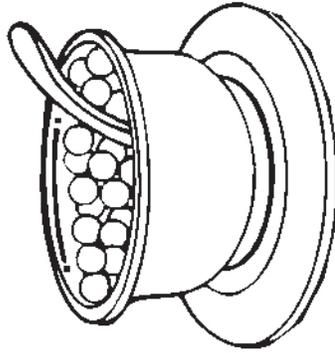
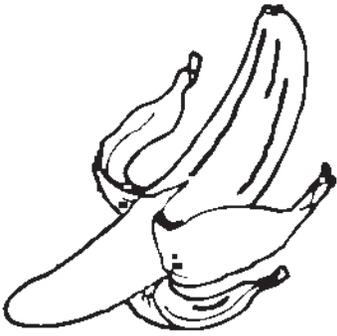


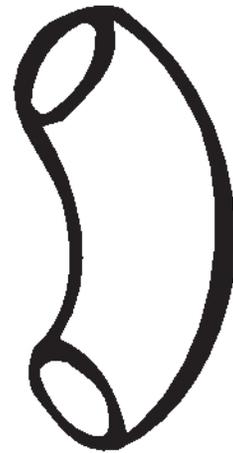
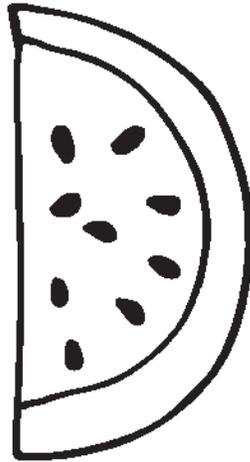
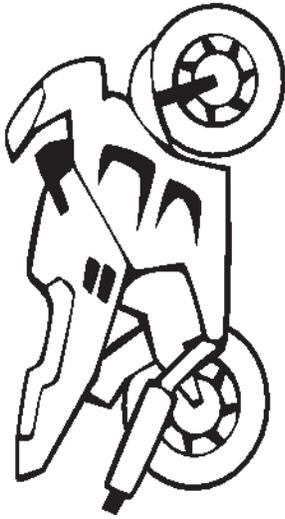
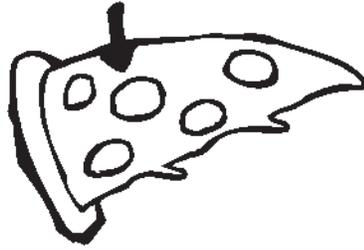
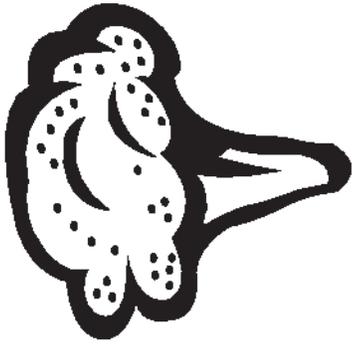
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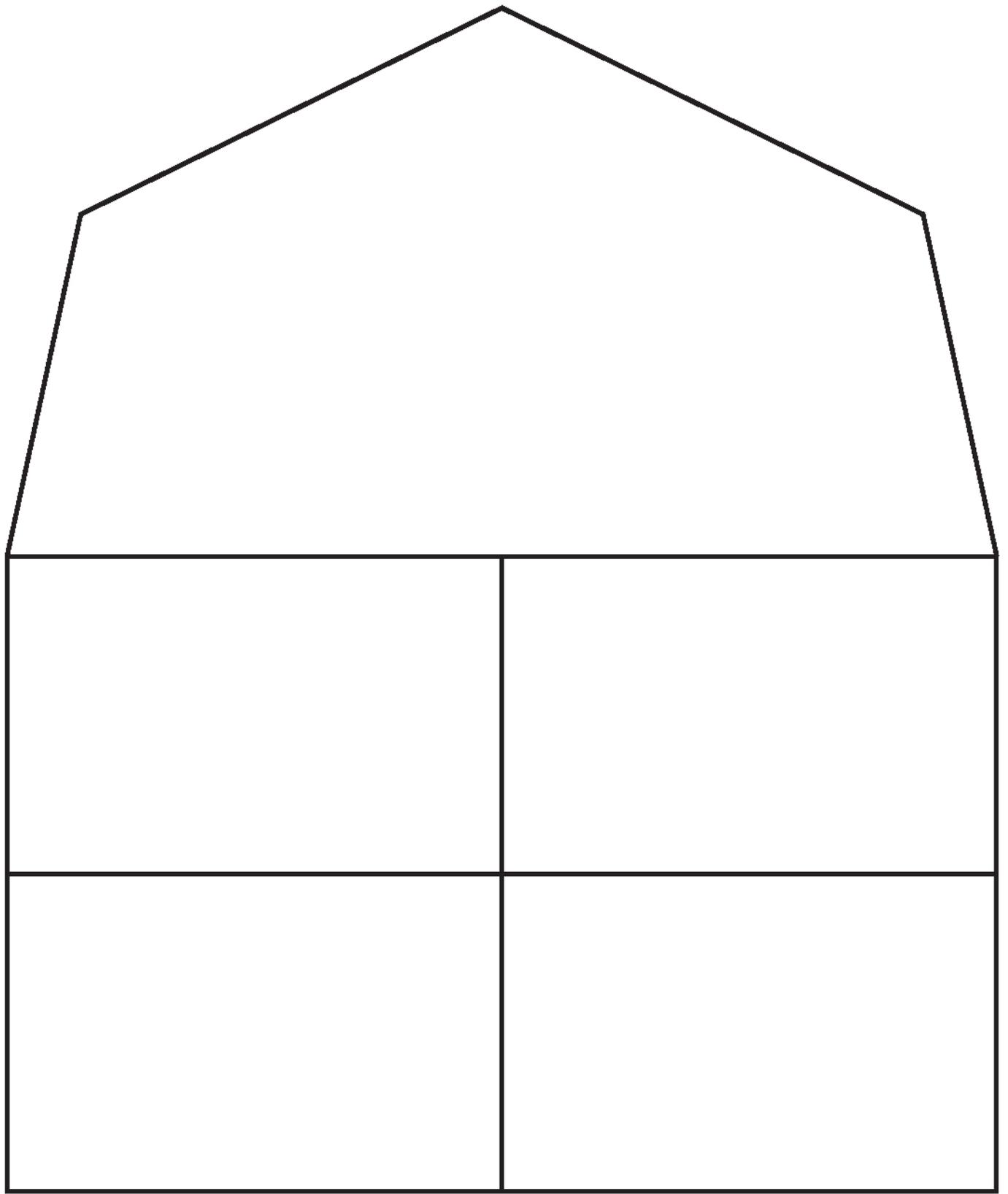


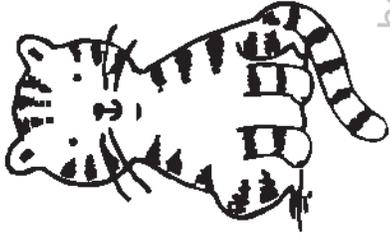


Phonemic Awareness - Onset and Rime

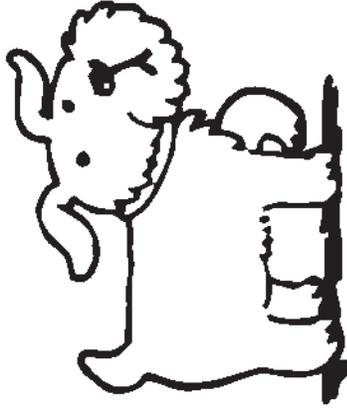
Rime House

1. Glue one header card in the top section of six rime house work boards.
2. Provide student with the six rime house work boards and onset and rime picture cards.
3. Student lines up the six rime house work boards in a row. Place the onset and rime pictures in a stack.
4. Select an onset and rime picture card, segment the onset and rime.
5. Repeat the rime. Place the picture on the matching rime house.
6. Continue until all onset and rime picture cards are sorted.

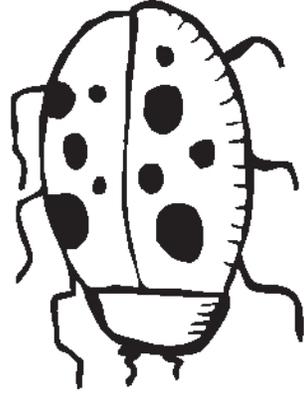




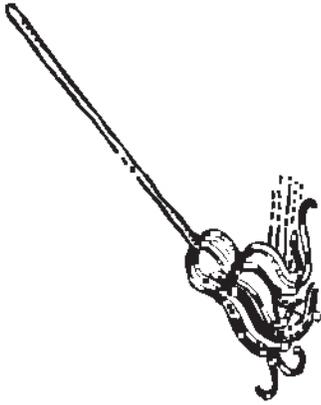
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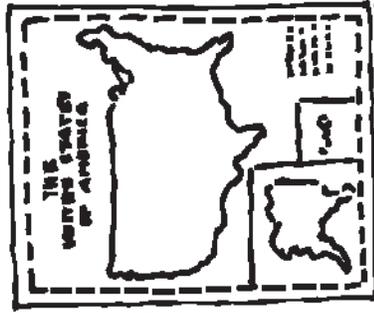
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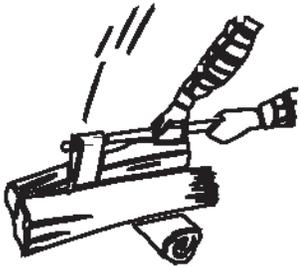
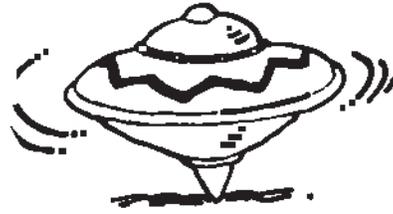
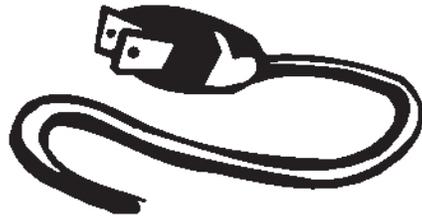
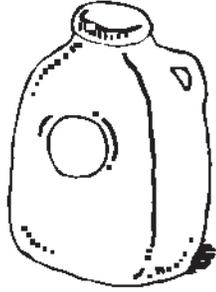
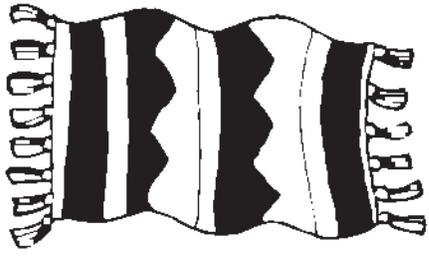


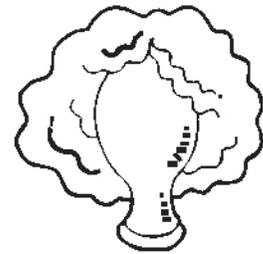
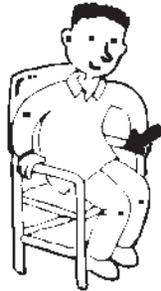
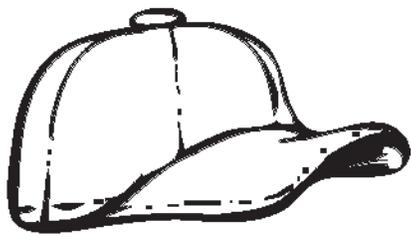
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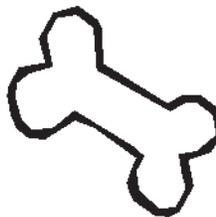
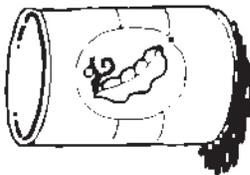
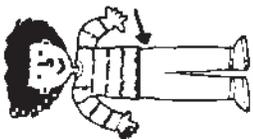
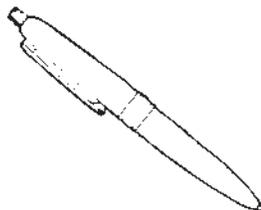
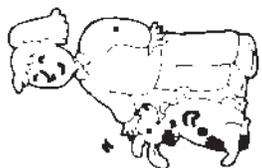
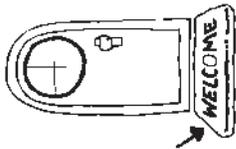
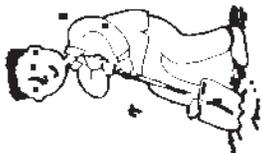
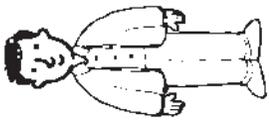


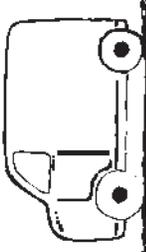
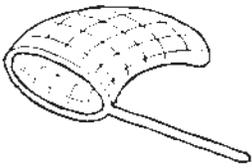
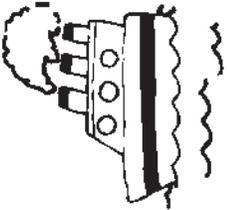
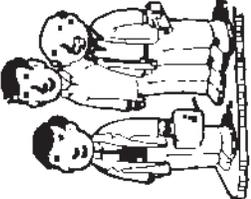
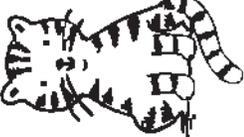
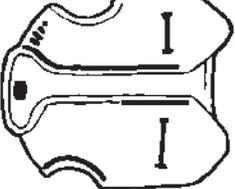
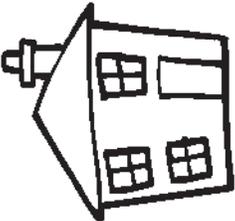
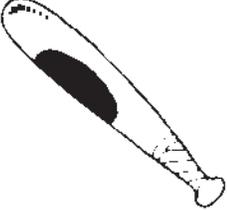
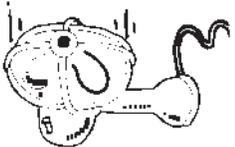
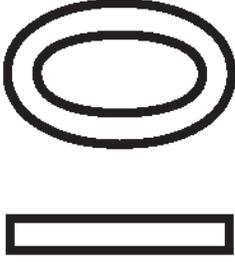


Phonemic Awareness – Onset and Rime

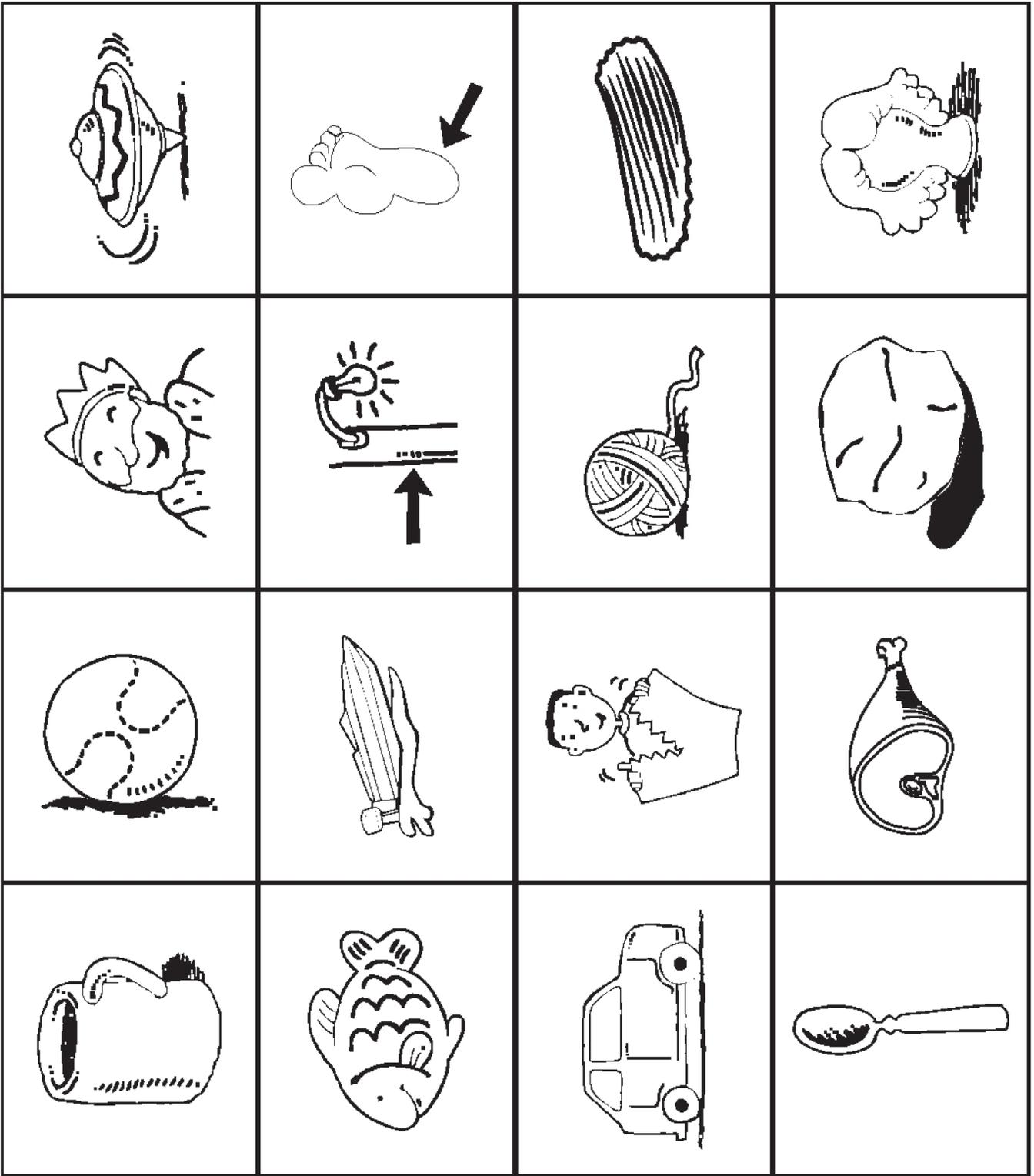
Onset and Rime Match

1. Provide student with the rime picture board and rime picture cards.
2. Student places the rime picture cards in a stack next to the rime picture board.
3. Select a picture card and says the picture name. Segment the word into the onset and rime.
4. Find the corresponding rime on the picture board and place the picture card on top of it.
5. Continue until all rimes have been matched.



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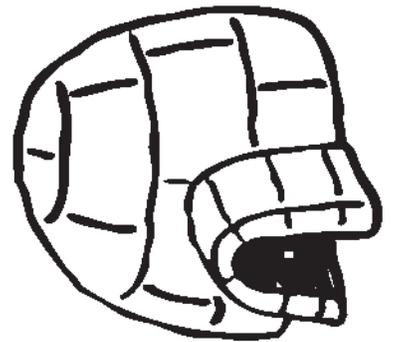
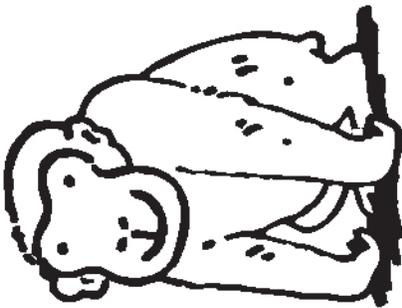
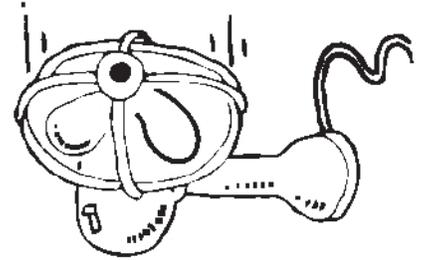
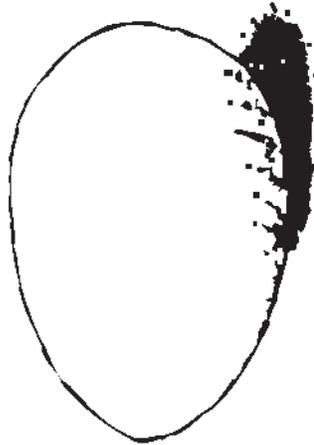
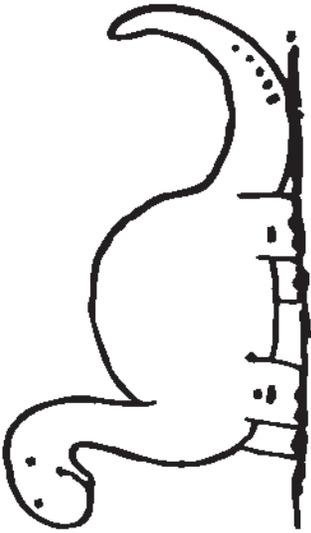
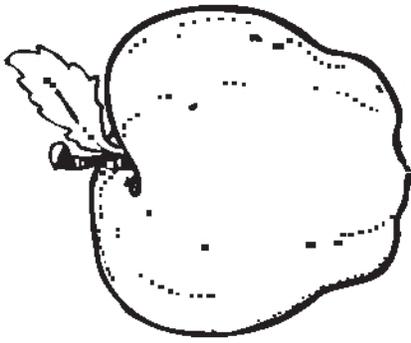


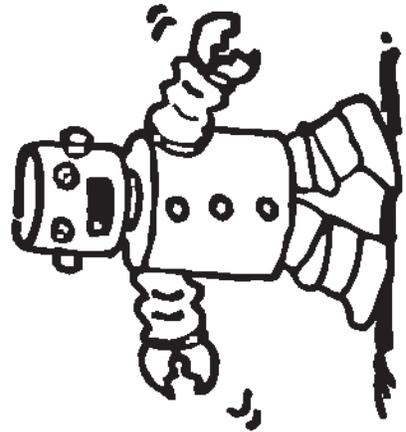
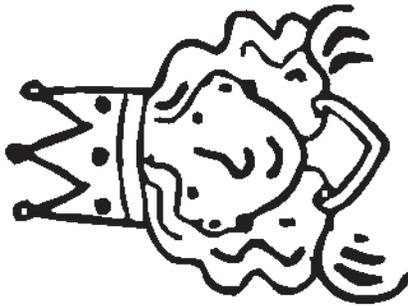
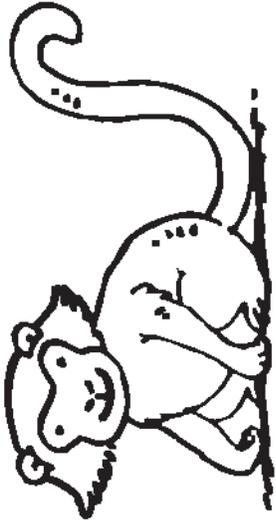
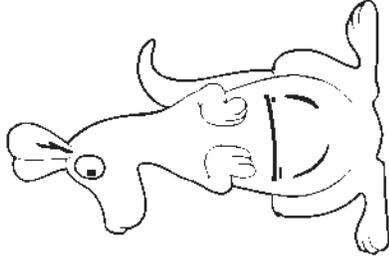
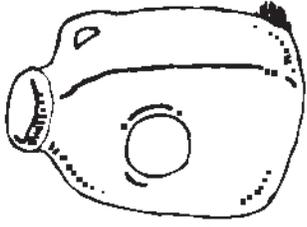


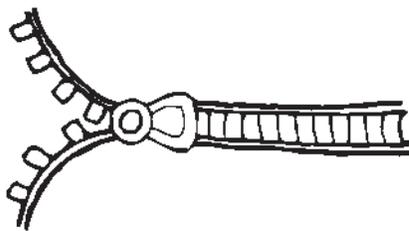
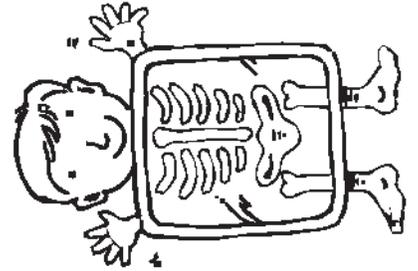
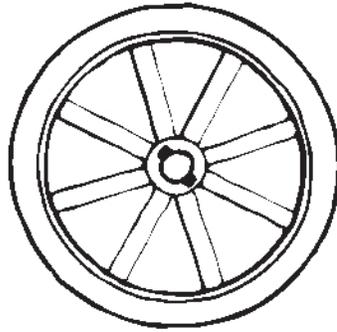
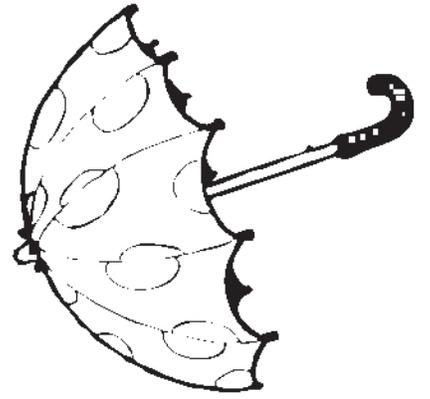
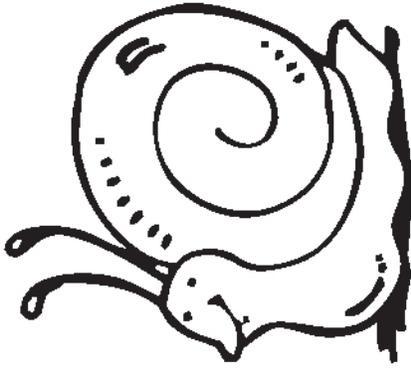
Phonemic Awareness - Phoneme Matching – Initial Sound

Sound it – Bag it

1. Glue a sound picture card to each of 26 small brown bags.
2. Provide students with 26 bags and magazines.
3. Student lays the bags out in a row.
4. Cut out pictures from magazines that match the initial sound on each bag.
5. Name each cut out picture, say its initial sound, and place picture in bag.







Phonemic Awareness – Phoneme Matching – Initial Sound

One Card Out

1. Place initial sound picture cards with the same numbers in separate rows in a pocket chart. Place the cards with circles and lines face up in a stack.
2. Student names the pictures in a row and says its each initial sound.
3. Place the circle card with line over the picture that is different.
4. Continue until one picture in each row has been covered.



1



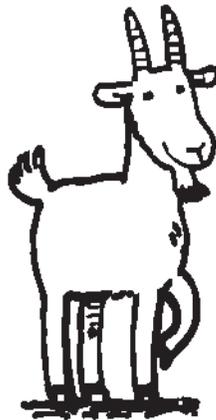
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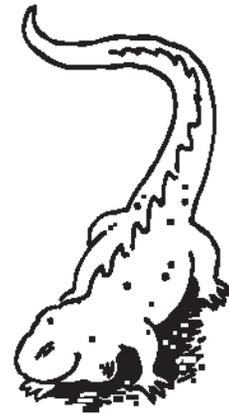
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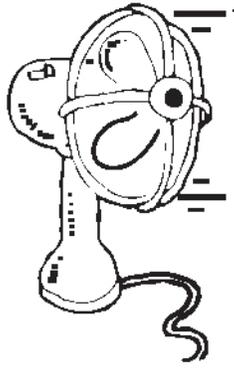


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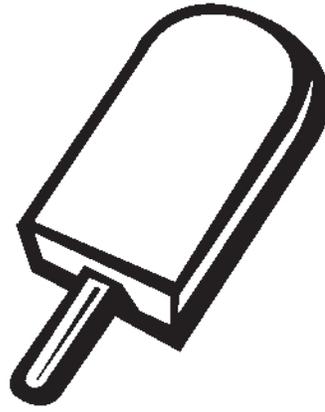


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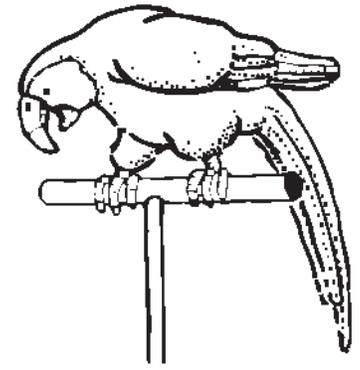




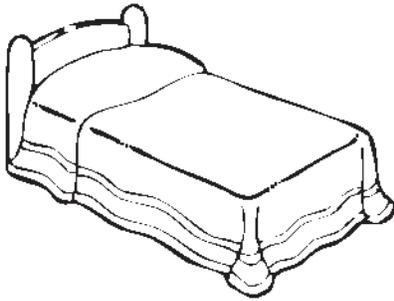
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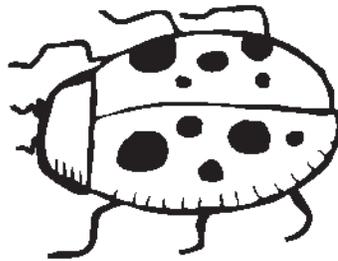
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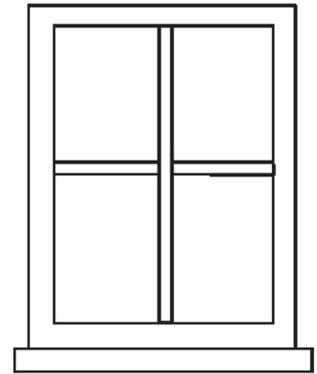
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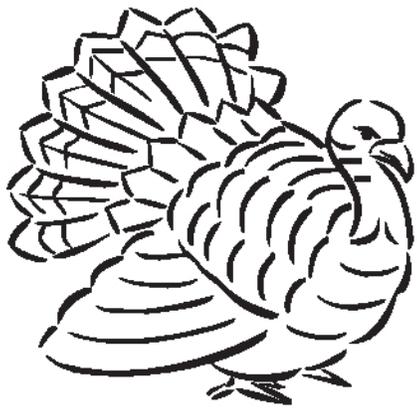


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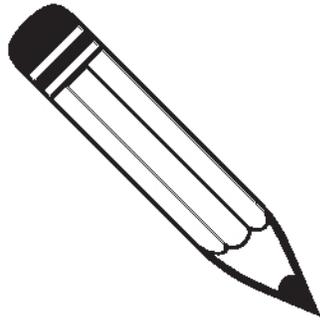


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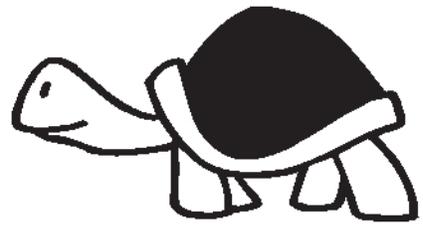




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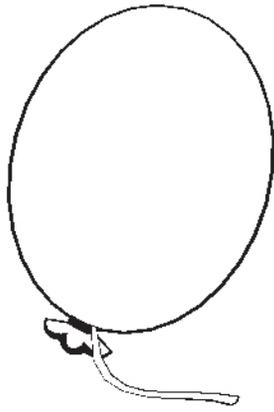


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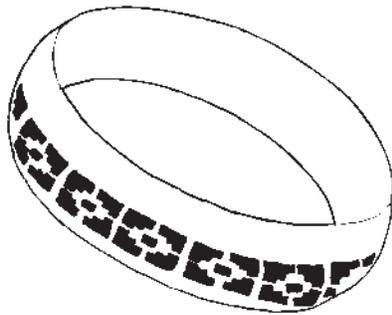
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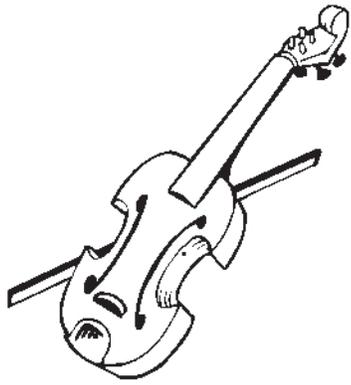


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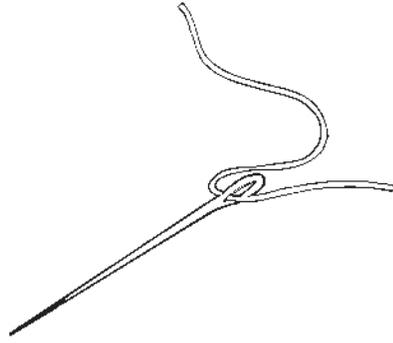


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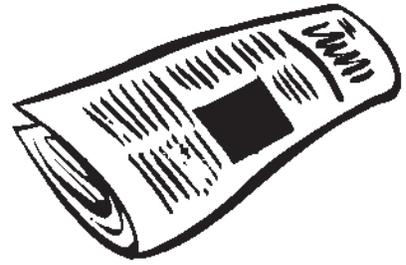




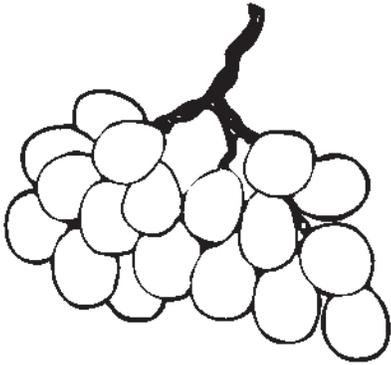
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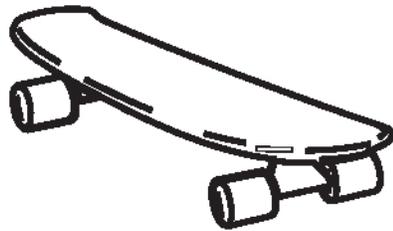
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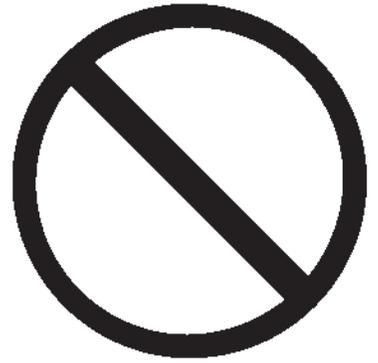
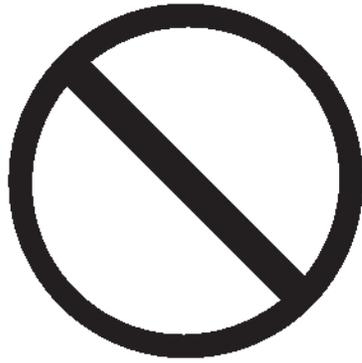


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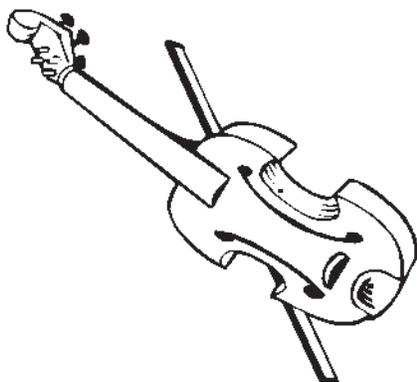
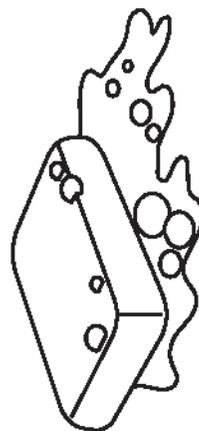
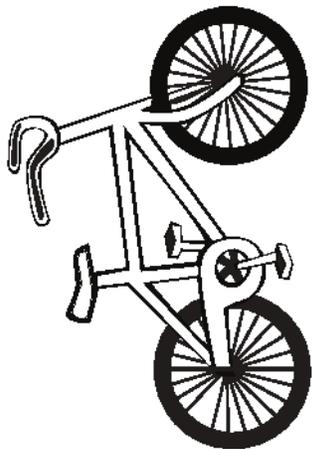




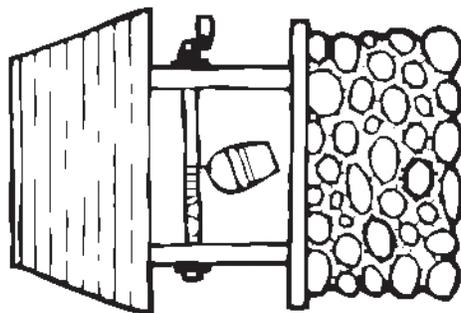
Phonemic Awareness - Phoneme Matching – Final Sound

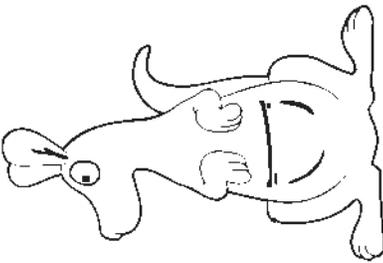
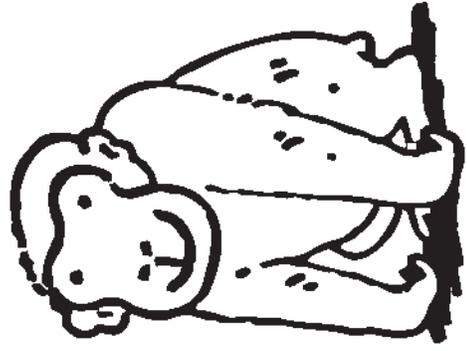
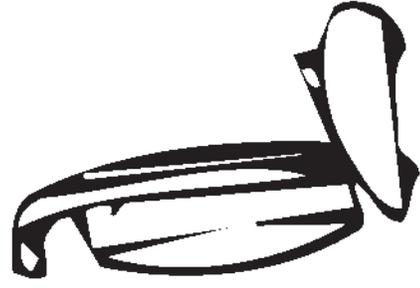
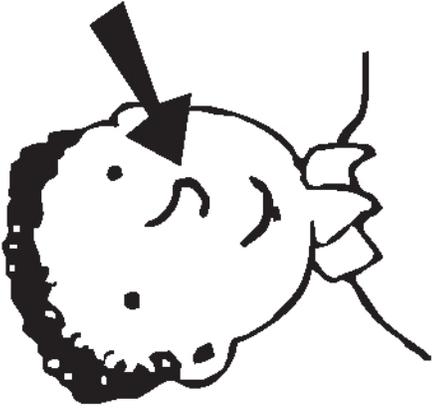
Final Sound Match-Up

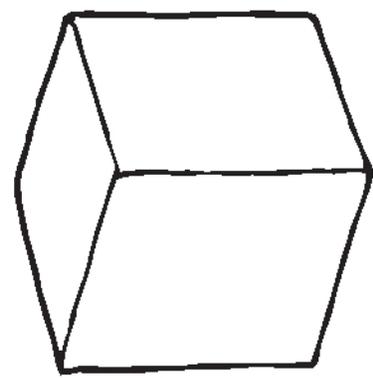
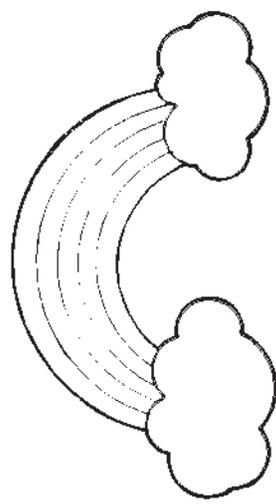
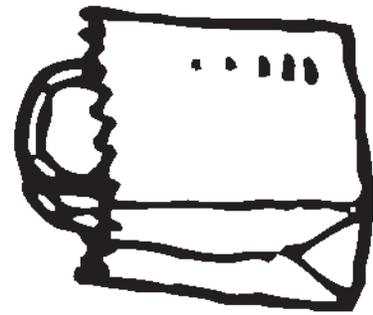
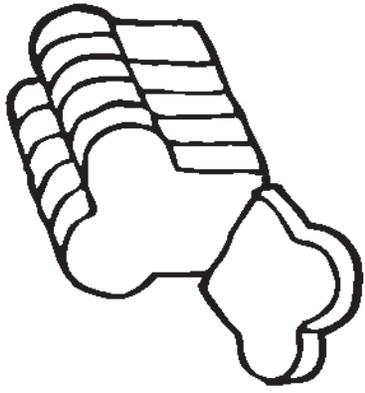
1. Provide student with a picture board and picture cards.
2. Student places the picture cards face down in a stack besides the picture board.
3. Students selects the top picture card, names it, and says it final sound.
4. Find the picture on the picture board with the same final sound and name it. Place the picture card on top of that picture.
5. Continue until all matches have been made.

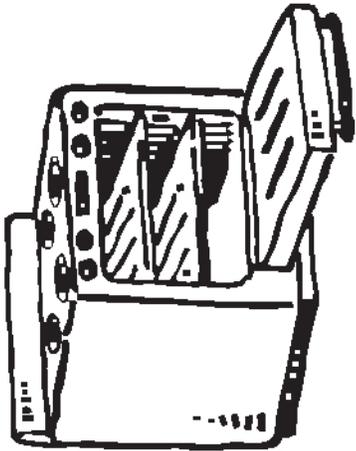
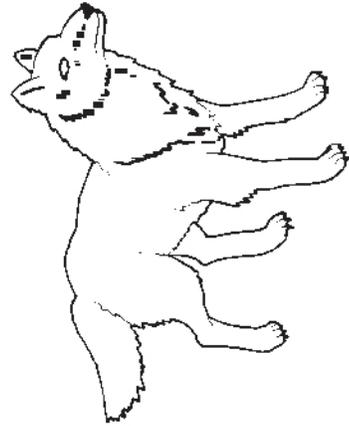
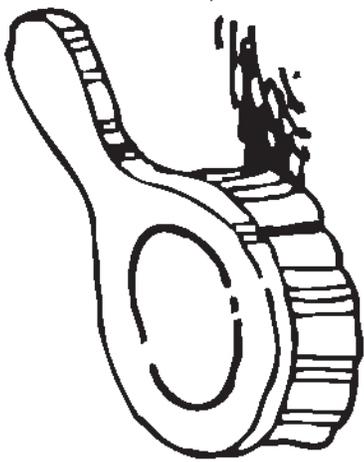
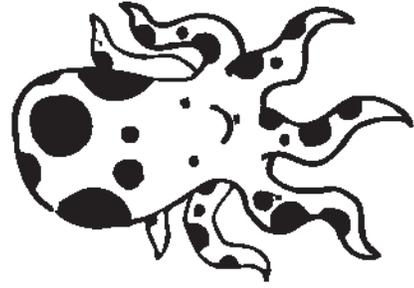
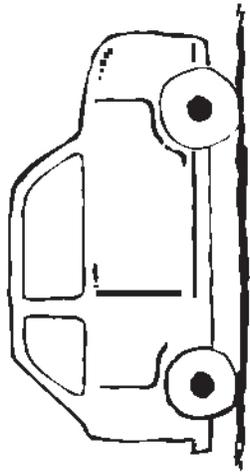


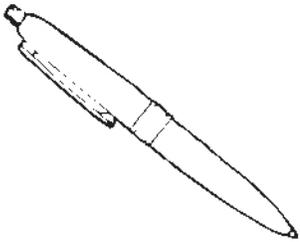
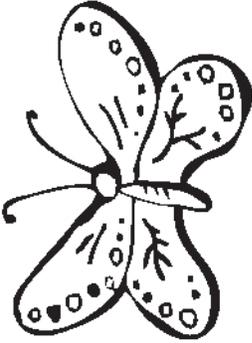
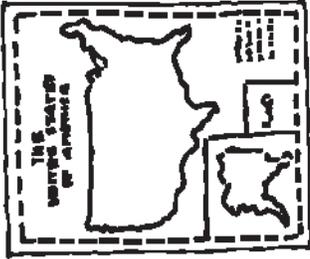
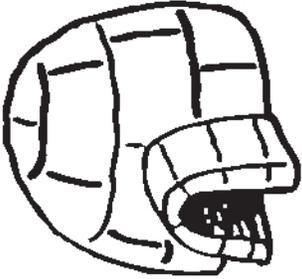
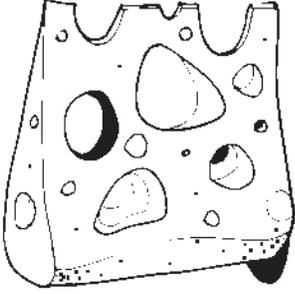
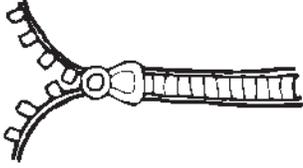
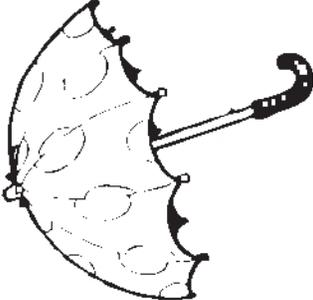
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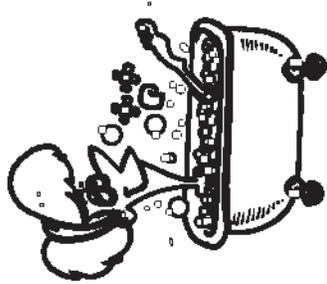
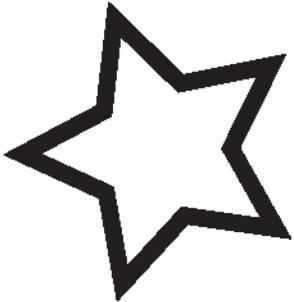
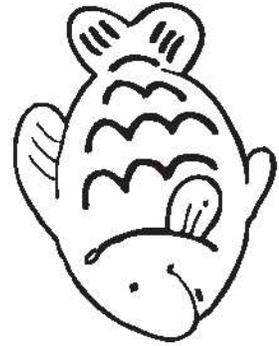
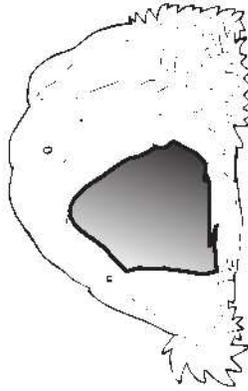
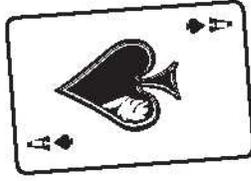
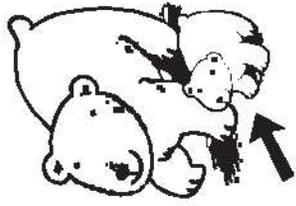






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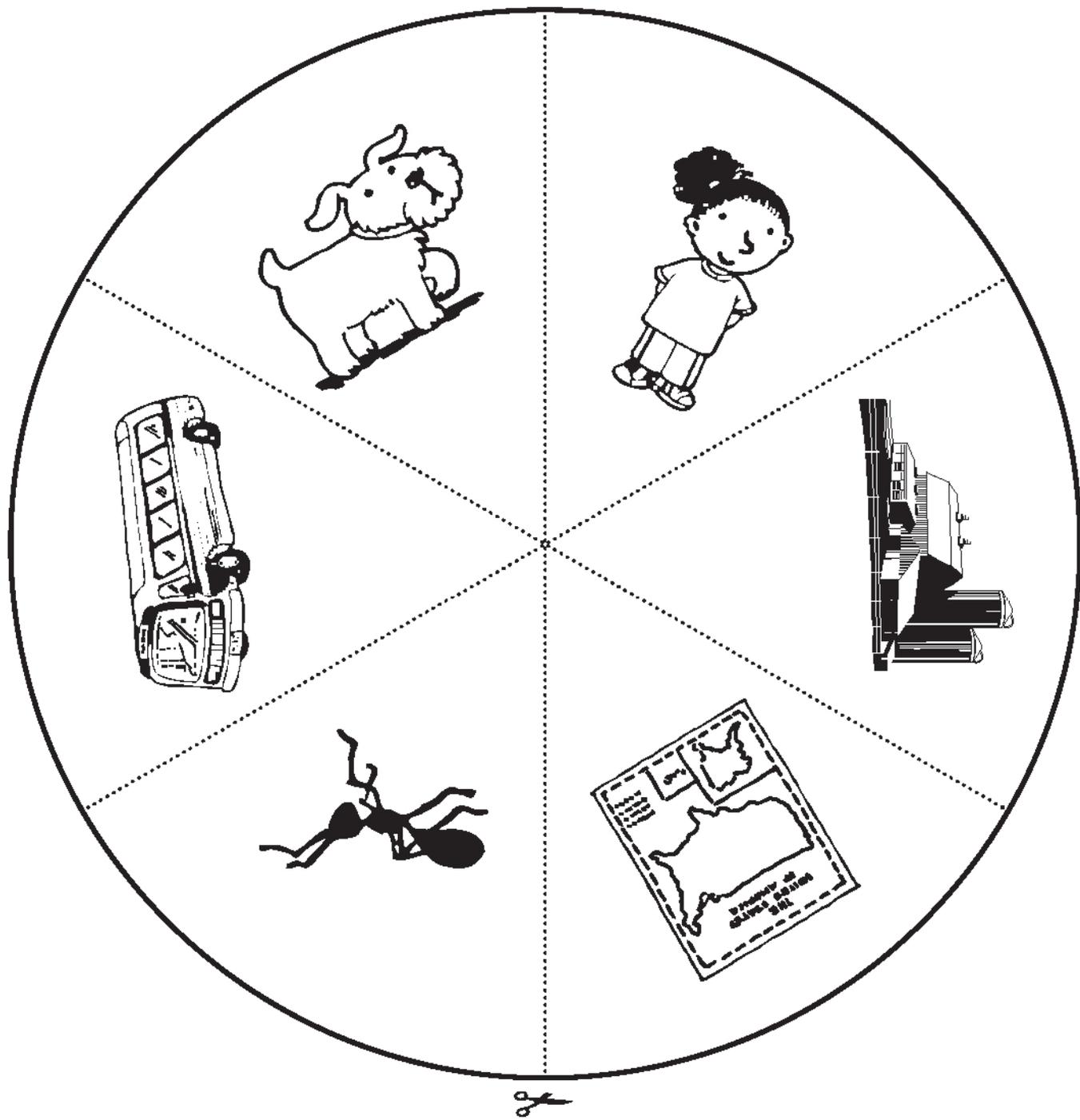




Phonemic Awareness - Phoneme Matching – Final Sound

Sound Pie

1. Provide student with one picture wedge from sound pie, paper circle, and magazines.
2. Student glues the target sound picture on the paper circle. Name the picture and says its final sound.
3. Cuts out pictures from magazines that have the same target sound. Name the picture and say its final sound. Glue to paper circle.
4. Continue until at least six pictures have been glued on the circle.



Phonemic Awareness - Phoneme Matching – Medial Sound

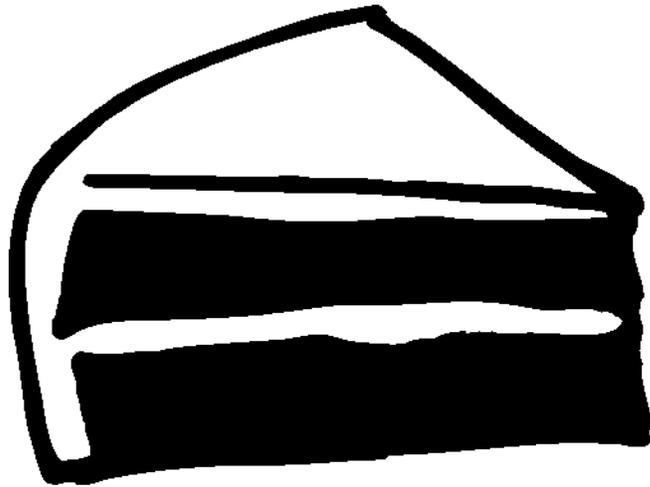
Sound Bags

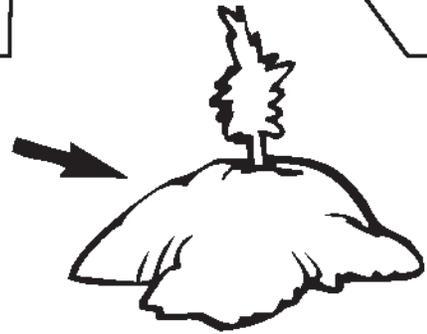
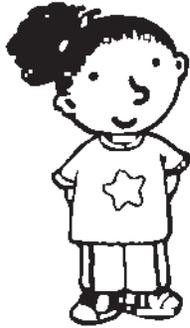
1. Provide student with paper bag that has pairs of objects with the same medial sound inside.
2. Student pulls out an object, says its names, and the medial sound. Find the other object that has the same medial sound, names it, and says the medial sound.
3. Put pairs together. Continue until all objects have been paired.

Phonemic Awareness- Phoneme Matching – Medial Sound

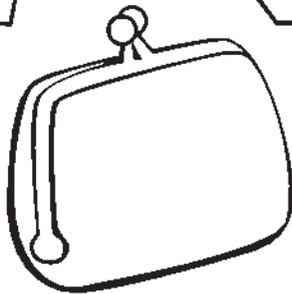
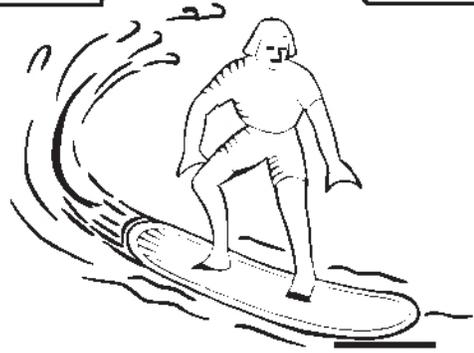
Sound Pictures and Picture Puzzles

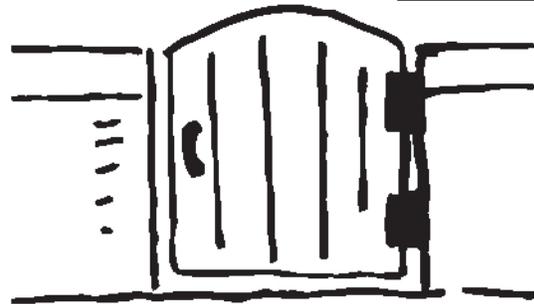
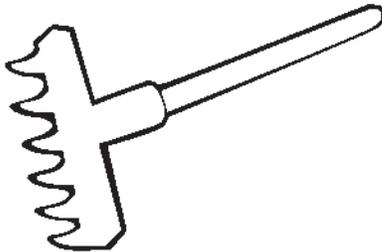
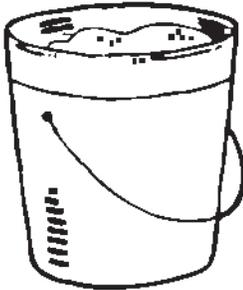
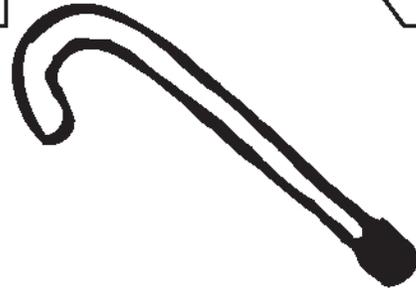
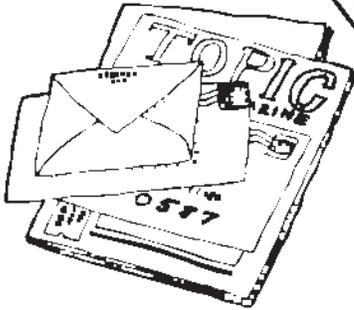
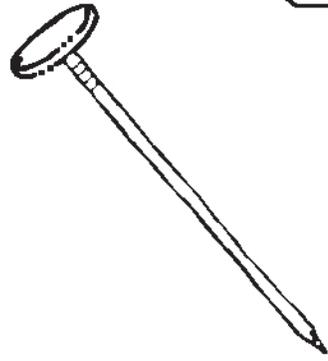
1. Provide student with a t-chart.
2. Student places header cards at the top of t-chart and scatters the medial sound picture puzzles around the t-chart.
3. Select a puzzle piece, say its name, and the medial sound. Place on t-chart under the column with the corresponding header card.
4. Continue until all puzzle pieces have been placed on the t-chart.
5. Assemble each puzzle.





3rd





Phonemic Awareness - Phoneme Segmenting

Phoneme Photos

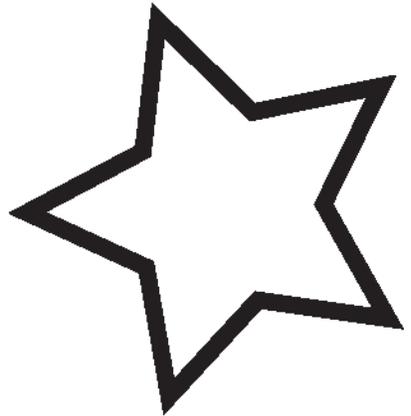
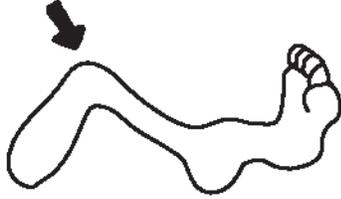
1. Provide student with photos of classmates and snap cubes.
2. Student selects a photo and determines the number of photos in the name.
3. Make an interlocking cube tower that matches the number of phonemes in the name. Place the cube tower beside the photo.
4. Continue until cube towers have been created and placed beside all photos.

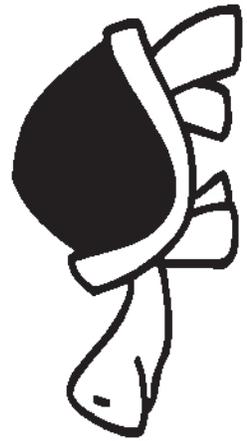
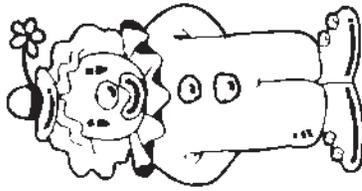
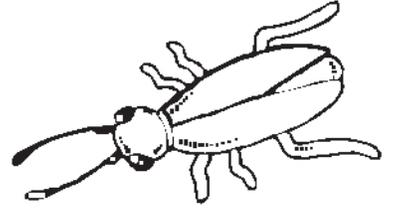
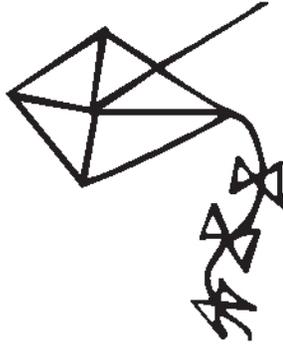
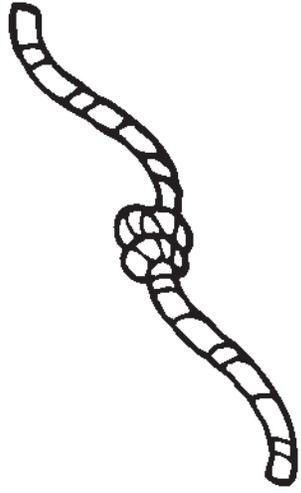
Phonemic Awareness – Phoneme Segmenting

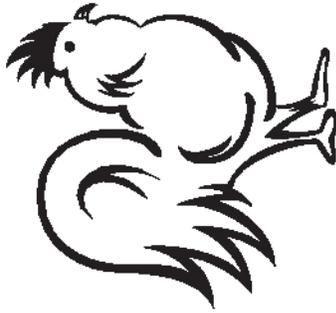
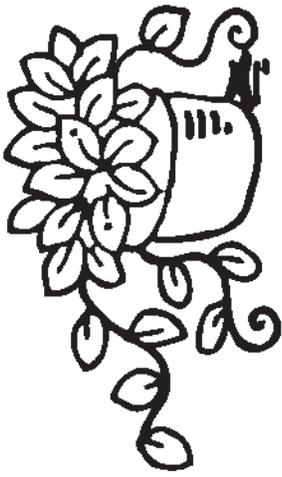
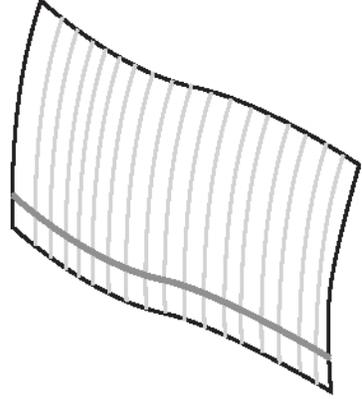
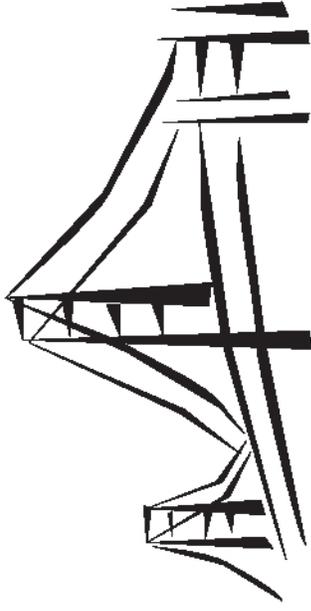
Phoneme Closed Sort

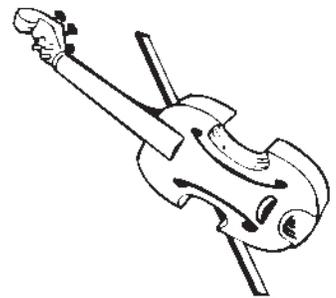
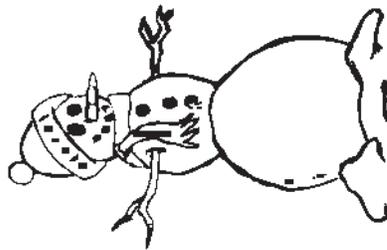
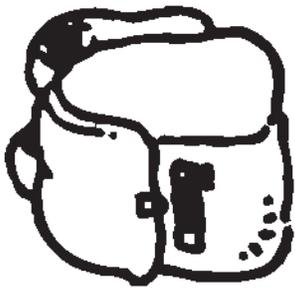
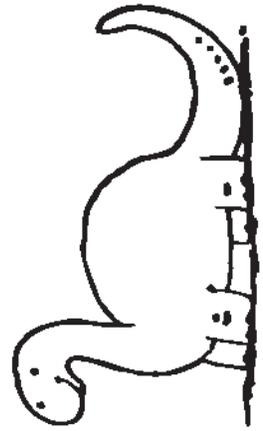
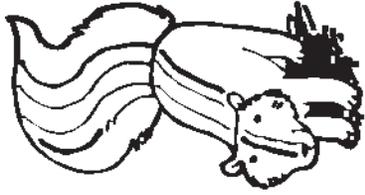
1. Student places number 2-6 at the top of a pocket chart.
2. Place phoneme picture cards face down in a stack.
3. Select a picture card, name the picture, and determine the number of phonemes in the word.
4. Place the picture card under the corresponding number on the pocket chart.
5. Continue until all picture cards have been sorted.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 5 | 6 | |









Phonemic Awareness – Phoneme Manipulating

Name Changes

1. Record each script on a different tape (each script addresses phonemes in a different position within the word – initial, final, medial).
2. Provide student with script and student recording sheet at listening center.
3. Student listens to the directions on the tape.
4. Says the new word and pauses the tape.
5. Decides which picture represents the new word. Draws a line from the beginning picture to the picture of the new word that is formed.
6. Continue until recording sheet is completed.

Teacher Script

Preparation: Record the bold text.

After recording each item, allow wait time for student to say words at the ellipses (. . .). An answer key is provided at the bottom of the page.

Teacher begins recording

Listen to each word, follow the directions, and say the new word. For example say, "Cat."

Now

Change /k/ to /h/. Say the new word . . . "hat." Then pause the tape. Find the picture of the new word and draw a line from the beginning word (cat) to the new word (hat). Begin the tape again and go on to the next picture.

Let's begin.

Number 1. Say fan . . . Now change the /f/ to /k/ . . . Say the new word

Number 2. Say pen . . . Now change the /p/ to /h/ . . . Say the new word

Number 3. Say goat . . . Now change the /g/ to /b/ . . . Say the new word

Number 4. Say rug . . . Now change the /r/ to /j/ . . . Say the new word

Number 5. Say cake . . . Now change the /k/ to /r/ . . . Say the new word

Number 6. Say bee . . . Now change the /b/ to /n/ . . . Say the new word

Number 7. Say sock . . . Now change the /s/ to /l/ . . . Say the new word

Number 8. Say mop . . . Now change the /m/ to /t/ . . . Say the new word

Number 9. Say hose . . . Now change the /h/ to /n/ . . . Say the new word

Number 10. Say nail . . . Now change the /n/ to /p/ . . . Say the new word...

Answer Key:

1. can 2. Hen 3. Boat 4. Jug 5. Rake 6. knee 7. lock 8. Top 9. Nose 10. Pail

Teacher Script

Preparation: Record the bold text.

After recording each item, allow wait time for student to say words at the ellipses (. . .).
An answer key is provided at the bottom of the page.

Teacher begins recording:

Listen to each word, follow the directions, and say the new word. For example say, "bat."

Now

Change /t/ to /k/. Say the new word . . . "back." Then pause the tape. Find the picture of the new word and draw a line from the beginning word (bat) to the new word (back). Begin the tape again and go on to the next picture.

Let's begin.

Number 1. Say cake . . . Now change the /k/ to /n/ . . . Say the new word

Number 2. Say five . . . Now change the /v/ to /l/ . . . Say the new word

Number 3. Say can . . . Now change the /n/ to /t/ . . . Say the new word

Number 4. Say bat . . . Now change the /t/ to /j/ . . . Say the new word

Number 5. Say kiss . . . Now change the /s/ to /ng/ . . . Say the new word

Number 6. Say bus . . . Now change the /s/ to /g/ . . . Say the new word

Number 7. Say cow . . . Now change the /ow/ to /ē/ . . . Say the new word

Number 8. Say doll . . . Now change the /l/ to /k/ . . . Say the new word

Number 9. Say pig . . . Now change the /g/ to /n/ . . . Say the new word

Number 10. Say rope . . . Now change the /p/ to /ch/ . . . Say the new word

Answer Key:

1. Cane 2. File 3. Cat 4. Badge 5. King 6. bug 7. key 8. Dock 9. Pin 10. Roach

Teacher Script

Preparation: Record the bold text.

After recording each item, allow wait time for student to say words at the ellipses (. . .). An answer key is provided at the bottom of the page.

Teacher begins recording:

Listen to each word, follow the directions, and say the new word. For example say, "hot." Now change the /o/ to /a/. Say the new word . . . "hat." Then pause the tape. Find the picture of the new word and draw a line from the beginning word (hot) to the new word (hat). Begin the tape again and go on to the next picture.

Let's begin.

Number 1. Say cub . . . Now change the /u/ to /a/ . . . Say the new word

Number 2. Say cart . . . Now change the /ar/ to /ī/ . . . Say the new word

Number 3. Say bell . . . Now change the /e/ to /aw/ . . . Say the new word

Number 4. Say pin . . . Now change the /i/ to /e/ . . . Say the new word

Number 5. Say bike . . . Now change the /ī/ to /ā/ . . . Say the new word

Number 6. Say chalk . . . Now change the /aw/ to /e/ . . . Say the new word

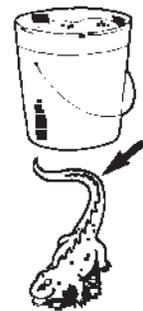
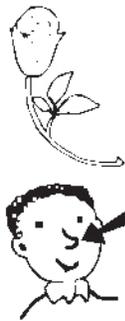
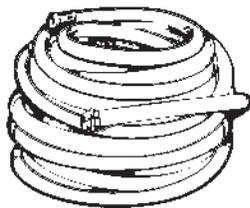
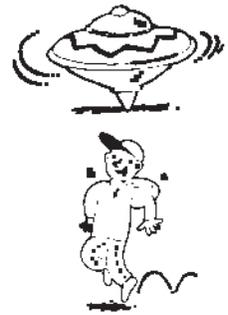
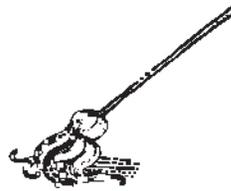
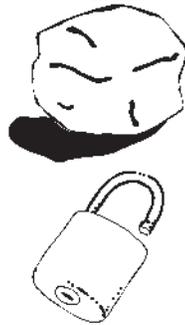
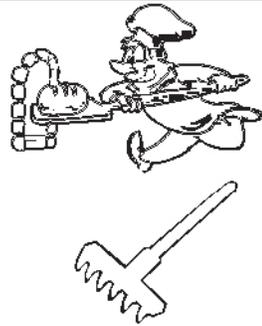
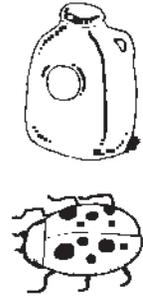
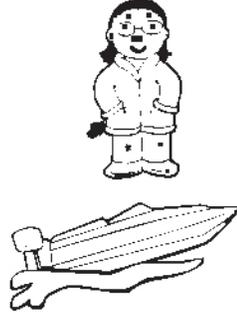
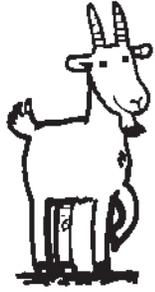
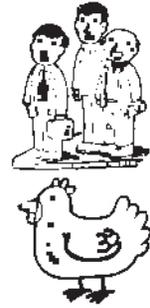
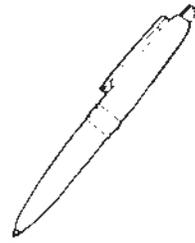
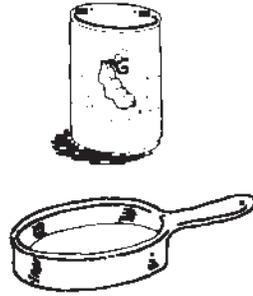
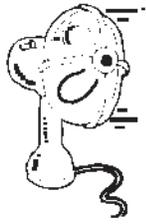
Number 7. Say pail . . . Now change the /ā/ to /ōō/ . . . Say the new word

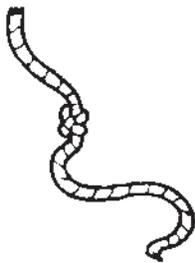
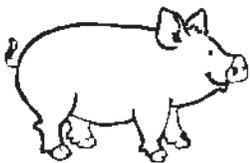
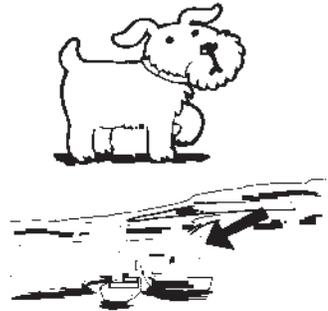
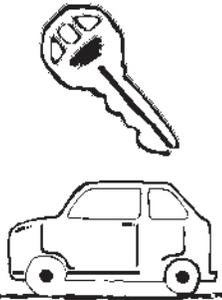
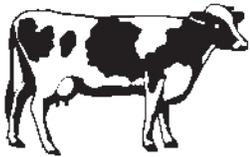
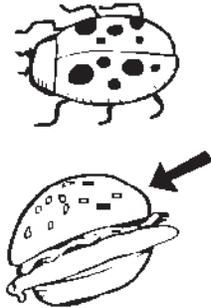
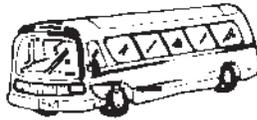
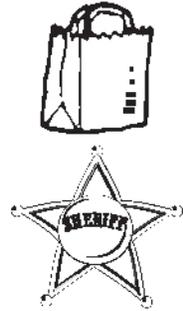
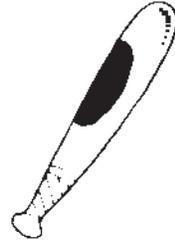
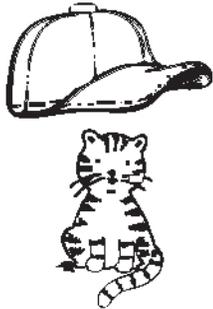
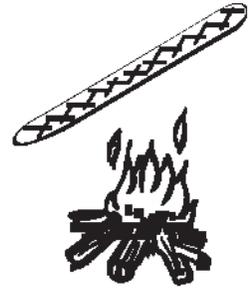
Number 8. Say bat . . . Now change the /a/ to /ē/ . . . Say the new word Number 9. Say moon . . . Now change the /ōō/ to /a/ . . . Say the new word

Number 10. Say phone . . . Now change the /ō/ to /i/ . . . Say the new word

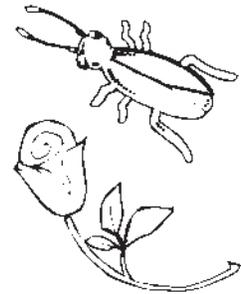
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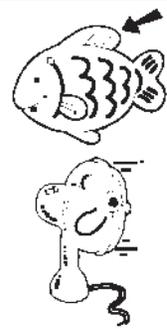
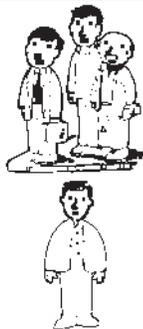
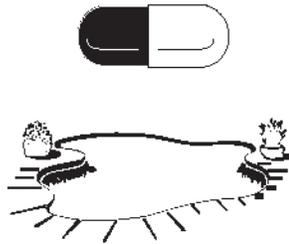
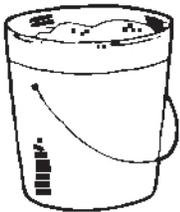
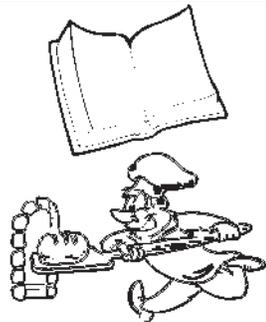
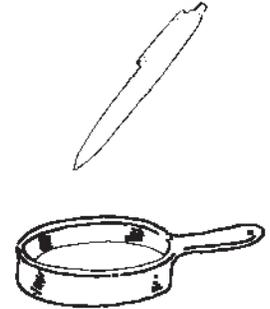
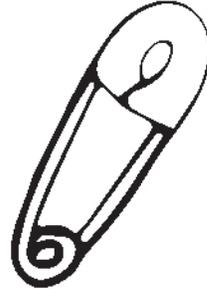
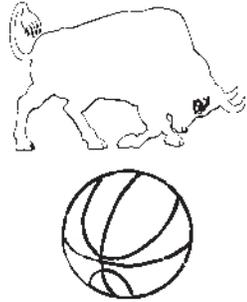
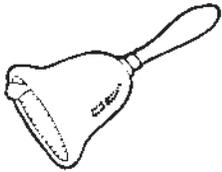
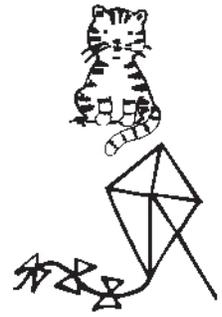
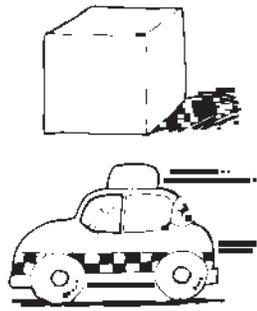
1. Cab 2. Kite 3. Ball 4. Pen 5. Bake 6. Check 7. Pool 8. Beet 9. Man 10. Fin





5





Vocabulary

Dolch Sight Word List Assessment

List 1

1. _____ the
2. _____ to
3. _____ and
4. _____ he
5. _____ a
6. _____ I
7. _____ you
8. _____ it
9. _____ of
10. _____ in
11. _____ was
12. _____ said
13. _____ his
14. _____ that
15. _____ she
16. _____ for
17. _____ on
18. _____ they
19. _____ but
20. _____ had

/20

List 2

1. _____ at
2. _____ him
3. _____ with
4. _____ up
5. _____ all
6. _____ look
7. _____ is
8. _____ her
9. _____ there
10. _____ some
11. _____ out
12. _____ as
13. _____ be
14. _____ have
15. _____ go
16. _____ we
17. _____ am
18. _____ then
19. _____ little
20. _____ down

/20

List 3

1. _____ do
2. _____ can
3. _____ could
4. _____ when
5. _____ did
6. _____ what
7. _____ so
8. _____ see
9. _____ not
10. _____ were
11. _____ get
12. _____ them
13. _____ like
14. _____ one
15. _____ this
16. _____ my
17. _____ would
18. _____ me
19. _____ will
20. _____ yes

/20

List 4

1. _____ big
2. _____ went
3. _____ are
4. _____ come
5. _____ if
6. _____ now
7. _____ long
8. _____ no
9. _____ came
10. _____ ask
11. _____ very
12. _____ an
13. _____ over
14. _____ your
15. _____ its
16. _____ ride
17. _____ into
18. _____ just
19. _____ blue
20. _____ red

/20

Vocabulary – High Frequency Words

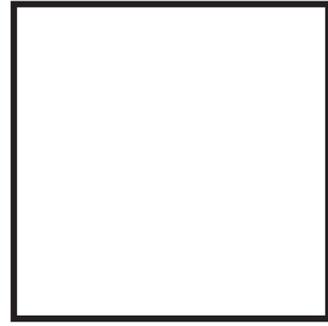
Memory Word Match

1. Place the memory words place down in rows.
2. Turn over two cards, read or say them orally, and determine if cards match.
3. If there is a match, place to the side. If they do not match, return to the original position.
4. Continue until all cards are matched.

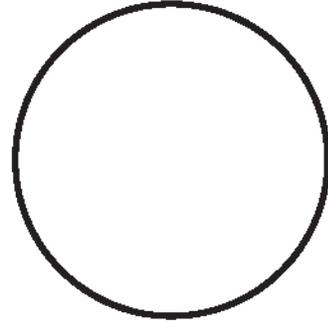
| | |
|--------------|----------|
| one | 1 |
| two | 2 |
| three | 3 |
| four | 4 |
| five | 5 |
| six | 6 |
| seven | 7 |

| | |
|--------------|-----------|
| eight | 8 |
| nine | 9 |
| ten | 10 |

Square



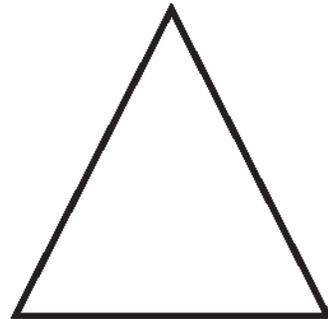
Circle



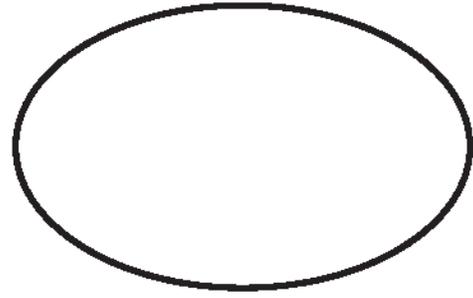
Rectangle



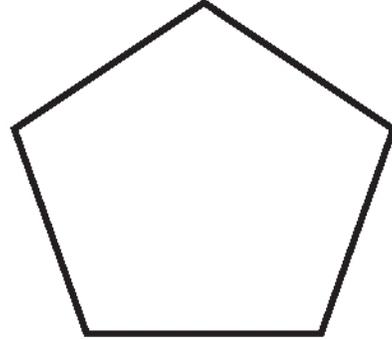
Triangle



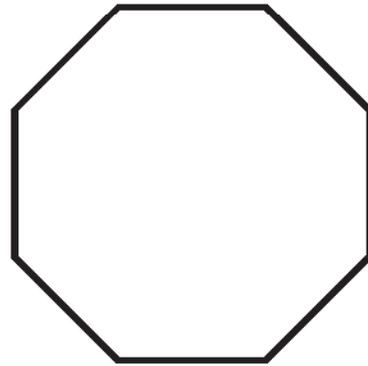
Oval



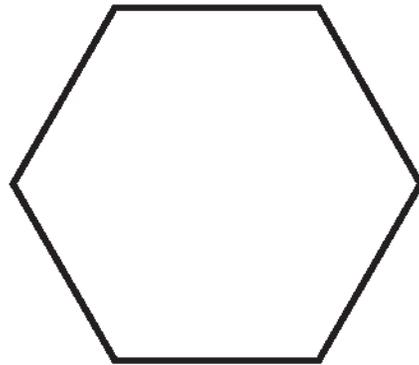
Pentagon



Octagon



Hexagon



High Frequency Words

Tactile Words

1. Make tactile word cards using sandpaper, corrugated cardboard, rice, sand, etc.
2. Provide student with tactile words, magazines, scissors, and glue.
3. Students selects a tactile word and reads it. Say each letter while tracing with a finger. Write the word on the word board recording sheet.
4. Find the target word in a magazine, cut it out, and glue it beside the matching word on the recording sheet.
5. Continue until all target words are recorded.

was

the

and



he

she

are



is

said

that

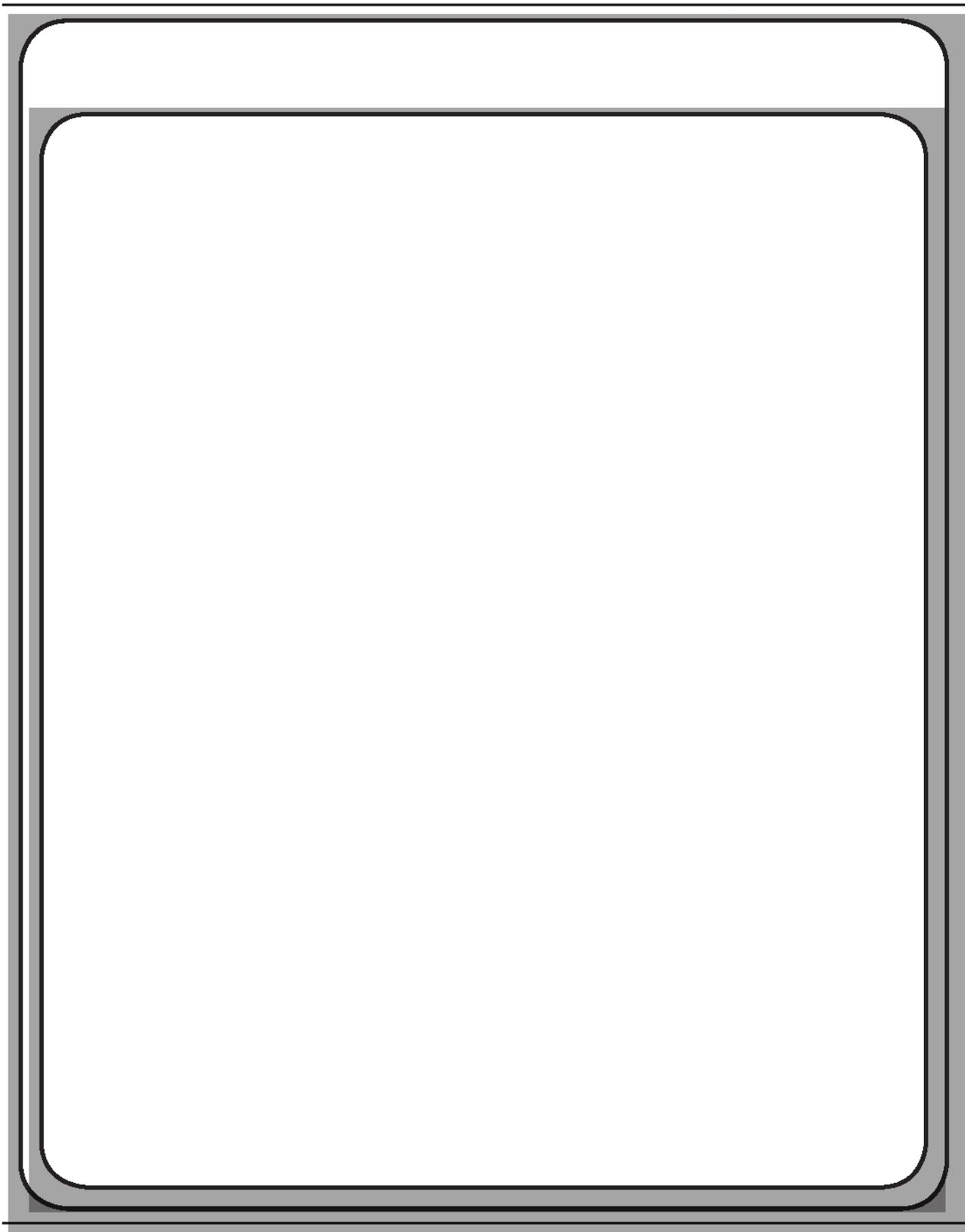


in

of

to





Vocabulary – High Frequency Words

Reading Bingo

1. Provide student with a bingo card with sight words written on it. As student reads an independent reader, they search for the sight words, writing the page number beside the sight word on the bingo board.
2. Variation: Let student write in sight words that they find. Record the page number for evaluation purposes.

Vocabulary – High Frequency Words

Words in Writing

1. Provide students with a list of sight words.
2. Students rainbow write the words and/or use them in sentences.

Vocabulary – High Frequency Words

Maximum Words in a Story

1. Student writes a story involving as many sight words as possible.
2. Underline all the sight words and write the number.

Vocabulary – High Frequency Words

Wide Reading

1. Student participates in readings of independent text, environmental print, and read alongs on tape.
2. Offer multiple opportunities for readings of same text.

Vocabulary – Content Area

Visual Imagery

1. Student keeps a journal of content area vocabulary words.
2. In the journal, student writes vocabulary words and creates a visual imagery for each word (visually representing a words and its meaning).
3. Use vocabulary words in sentences.

Vocabulary – Content Area

Sorting

1. Provide content area pictures that can be sorted in two groups (e.g. reptile and mammals) and a t-chart.
2. Student sorts the pictures on the t-chart. Label words on the chart.

Comprehension

Comprehension Assessment

Use Fountas & Pinnell Assessment for Comprehension Purposes.

Fountas & Pinnell Benchmark Criteria

Fountas & Pinnell Benchmark Assessment Criteria for Levels A–K

| Accuracy | Comprehension | | | |
|-----------|---------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|
| | Excellent | Satisfactory | Limited | Unsatisfactory |
| 95 – 100% | 6–7 | 5 | 4 | 0–3 |
| | Independent | Independent | Instructional | Hard |
| 90 – 94% | Instructional | Instructional | Hard | Hard |
| Below 90% | Hard | Hard | Hard | Hard |

Fountas & Pinnell Benchmark Assessment Criteria for Levels L–Z

| Accuracy | Comprehension | | | |
|-----------|---------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|
| | Excellent | Satisfactory | Limited | Unsatisfactory |
| 98 – 100% | 9–10 | 7–8 | 5–6 | 0–4 |
| | Independent | Independent | Instructional | Hard |
| 95 – 97% | Instructional | Instructional | Hard | Hard |
| Below 95% | Hard | Hard | Hard | Hard |

Comprehension

Sentence Picture Match

1. Provide student with pictures from print resources and sentence strips that have simple sentences describing the picture (e.g. picture of a blue ball – sentence – It is a blue ball.).
2. Place pictures vertically down the left side of pocket chart. Place sentence strips face down in a stack.
3. Student selects a sentence strip, reads it, determines which picture corresponds to the sentence, and places the sentence strip beside the picture.
4. Continue until all pictures and sentence strips are matched.

Comprehension

Story Sequencing

1. After reading an independent text, listening to a read-aloud, or listening to a text in a listening center, provide student with a story sequence recording sheet.
2. Student writes the title, author, and illustrates the beginning, middle, and end of story.
3. Write a sentence for each section if applicable.

Title _____

Beginning (What happened first?)

Middle (What happened next?)

End (What happened last?)

Comprehension

Story Elements

1. After reading an independent text, listening to a read-aloud, or listening to a text in a listening center, provide student with a story element recording sheet.
2. Student writes the title, author, and illustrates the story elements.
3. Write a sentence for each section if applicable.

Title: _____

Author: _____

Setting

Characters

Problem

Important Events

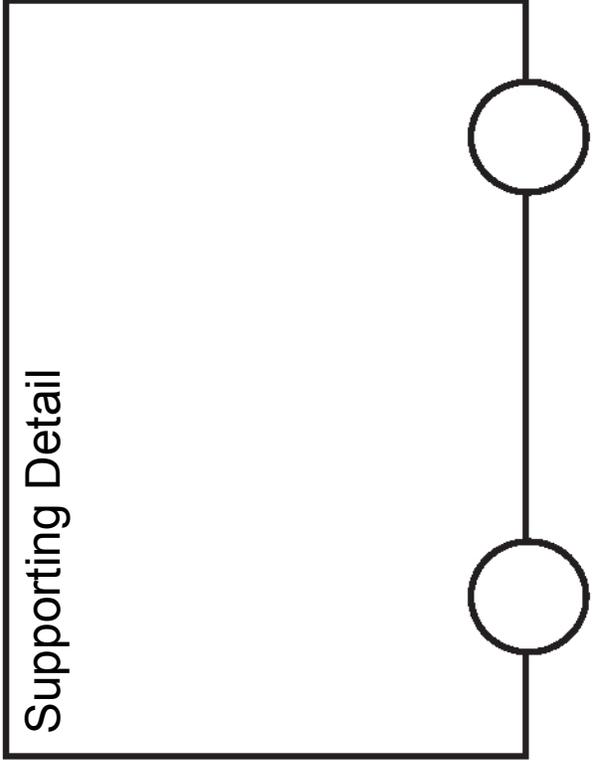
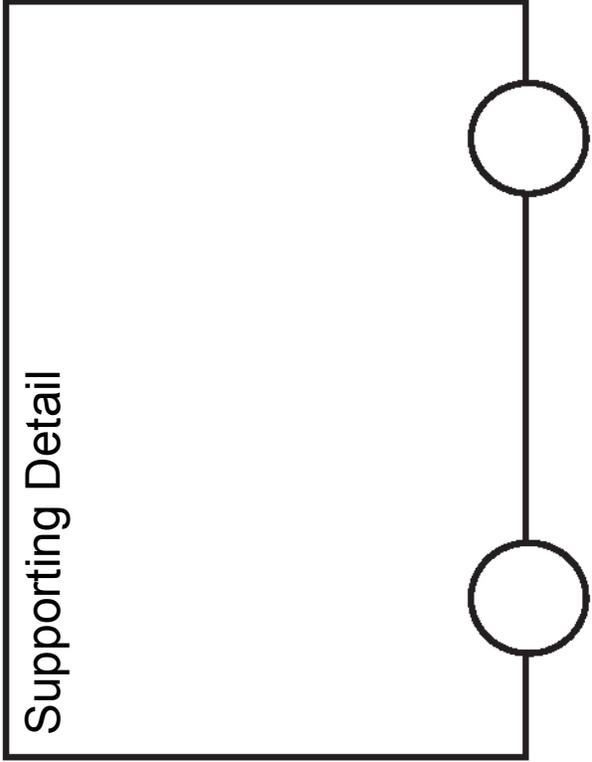
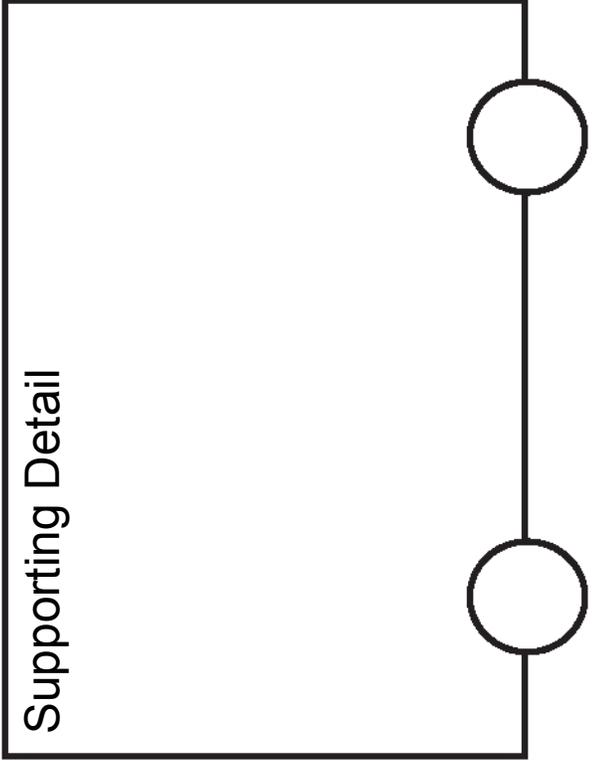
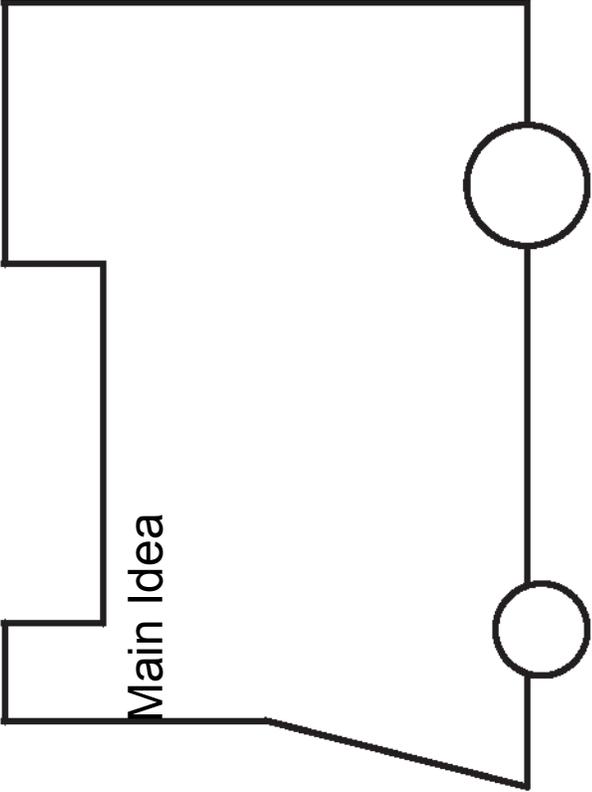
Solution

Comprehension
Identify Details in Text

1. After reading an independent text, listening to a read-aloud, or listening to a text in a listening center, provide student with a 6” X 18” construction paper strip, divided into four sections.
2. Student writes or illustrates the topic in the first square.
3. Write or illustrates the important facts from the story in the next three sections.

Comprehension
Identify Details in Text

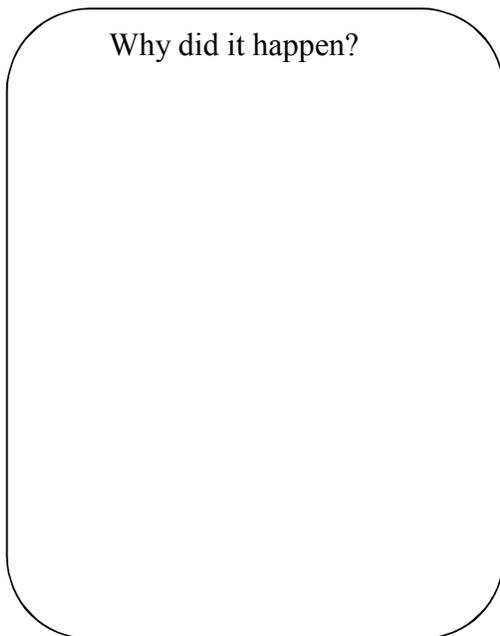
1. After reading an independent text, listening to a read-aloud, or listening to a text in a listening center, provide student with a train graphic organizer.
2. Students writes or illustrate the main idea and supporting details in the text.
3. Extension – Complete Venn diagram or cause and effect graphic organizers.



Cause and Effect

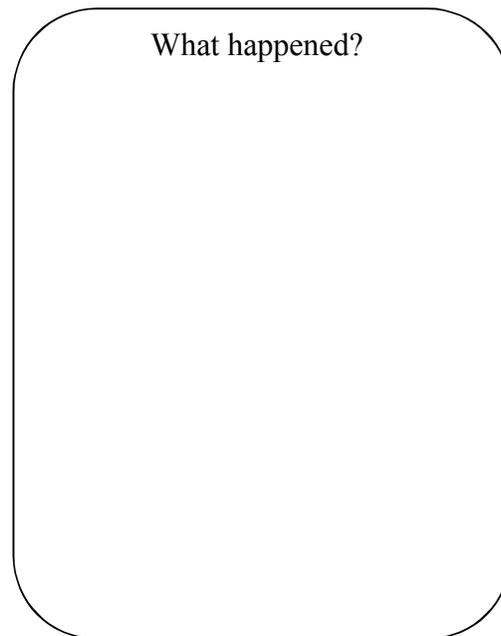
Title:
CAUSE

Why did it happen?

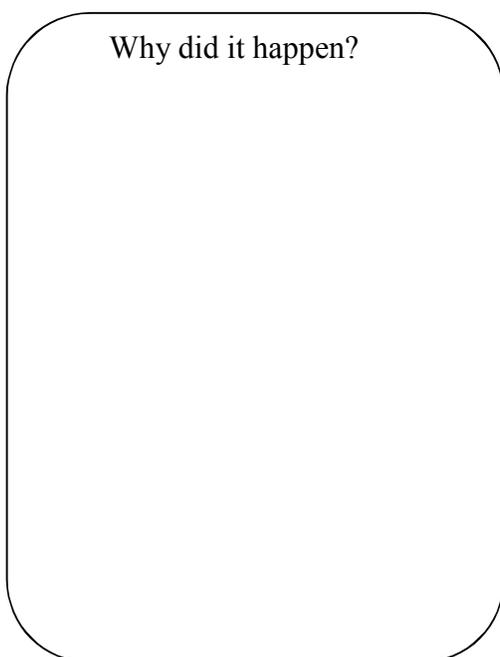


Author:
EFFECT

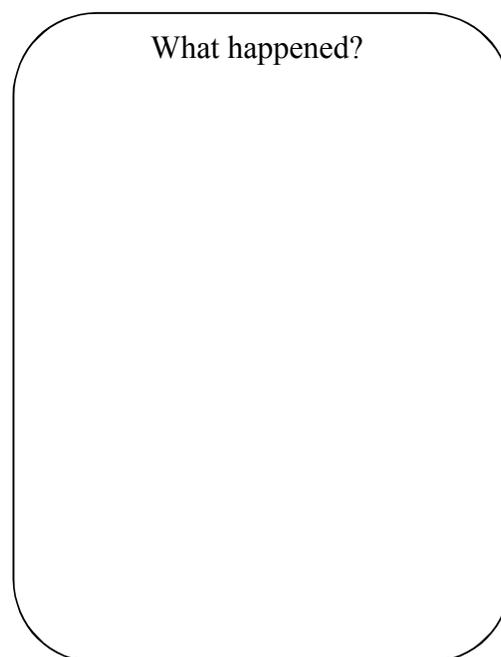
What happened?



Why did it happen?



What happened?



Fluency

Letter Name/Sound Fluency Benchmarks

| Date | Letter Name Fluency | Letter-Sound Fluency |
|--------|---------------------|----------------------|
| Fall | 11 | Not Tested |
| Winter | 30 | 17 |
| Spring | 46 | 33 |

Letter Name/Sound Fluency Chart

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A | X | o | B | O | s | T | a | E | r |
| E | x | S | Z | t | L | p | N | R | D |
| m | C | F | n | P | K | I | f | i | M |
| k | G | c | W | z | v | Q | h | U | y |
| w | u | d | V | l | j | b | q | J | A |
| E | a | B | o | s | A | x | r | O | T |
| Z | p | D | N | E | t | x | R | S | L |
| P | F | I | m | C | f | n | i | M | K |
| v | U | k | z | c | Q | h | y | W | G |
| j | d | l | w | q | j | A | u | V | b |

Dolch Sight Word List Assessment

List 1

1. _____ the
2. _____ to
3. _____ and
4. _____ he
5. _____ a
6. _____ I
7. _____ you
8. _____ it
9. _____ of
10. _____ in
11. _____ was
12. _____ said
13. _____ his
14. _____ that
15. _____ she
16. _____ for
17. _____ on
18. _____ they
19. _____ but
20. _____ had

List 2

1. _____ at
2. _____ him
3. _____ with
4. _____ up
5. _____ all
6. _____ look
7. _____ is
8. _____ her
9. _____ there
10. _____ some
11. _____ out
12. _____ as
13. _____ be
14. _____ have
15. _____ go
16. _____ we
17. _____ am
18. _____ then
19. _____ little
20. _____ down

List 3

1. _____ do
2. _____ can
3. _____ could
4. _____ when
5. _____ did
6. _____ what
7. _____ so
8. _____ see
9. _____ not
10. _____ were
11. _____ get
12. _____ them
13. _____ like
14. _____ one
15. _____ this
16. _____ my
17. _____ would
18. _____ me
19. _____ will
20. _____ yes

List 4

1. _____ big
2. _____ went
3. _____ are
4. _____ come
5. _____ if
6. _____ now
7. _____ long
8. _____ no
9. _____ came
10. _____ ask
11. _____ very
12. _____ an
13. _____ over
14. _____ your
15. _____ its
16. _____ ride
17. _____ into
18. _____ just
19. _____ blue
20. _____ red

Name _____

Level _____

A Scale for Assessing Fluency

| | | | | | |
|--|--------------------|--|--|---|--|
| 1 | Rate | Rate refers to the pace at which the reader moves through the text. An appropriate rate moves along rapidly with few slow-downs, stops, or long pauses to solve words. If a reader has only a few short pauses for word solving and picks up the pace again, look at the overall rate. The pace is also appropriate to the text—not too fast and not too slow. | | | |
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| | | Almost no evidence of appropriate rate during the reading. | Very little evidence of appropriate rate during the reading. | Some evidence of appropriate rate during the reading. | Almost all the reading evidences appropriate rate. |
| 2 | Phrasing | Phrasing refers to the way readers put words together in groups to represent the meaningful units of language. Phrased reading should sound like oral language, although more formal. | | | |
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| | | Almost no evidence of appropriate phrasing during the reading. | Very little evidence of appropriate phrasing during the reading. | Some evidence of appropriate phrasing during the reading. | Almost all the reading is appropriately phrased. |
| 3 | Intonation | Intonation refers to the way the reader varies the voice in tone, pitch, and volume to reflect the meaning of the text—sometimes called “expression.” | | | |
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| | | Almost no variation in voice or tone (pitch) to reflect the meaning of the text. | Very little evidence of variation in voice or tone (pitch) to reflect the meaning of the text. | Some evidence of variation in voice or tone (pitch) to reflect the meaning of the text. | Almost all the reading is characterized by variation in voice or tone (pitch) to reflect the meaning. |
| 4 | Pausing | Pausing refers to the way the reader is guided by punctuation (short breaths at commas; full stop at ending punctuation or dashes). Pausing also refers to how the reader uses the way print is organized on the page (line layouts, paragraphs, etc.) | | | |
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| | | Almost no pausing to reflect the punctuation and the meaning of the text. | Very little pausing to reflect the punctuation and meaning of the text. | Some pausing to reflect the punctuation and meaning of the text. | Almost all the reading is characterized by pausing to reflect the punctuation and meaning of the text. |
| 5 | Stress | Stress refers to the emphasis readers place on particular words (louder tone) to reflect the meaning as speakers would do in oral language. | | | |
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| | | Almost no stress on appropriate words to reflect the meaning of the text. | Very little stress on appropriate words to reflect the meaning of the text. | Some stress on appropriate words to reflect the meaning of the text. | Almost all the reading is characterized by stress on appropriate words to reflect the meaning of the text. |
| <i>Provide an overall assessment of fluency below:</i> | | | | | |
| 6 | Integration | Integration involves the way the reader consistently and evenly orchestrates rate, phrasing, pausing, intonation, and stress. | | | |
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| | | Almost none of the reading is fluent. | Very little of the reading is fluent. | Some of the reading is fluent. | Almost all of the reading is fluent. |

Using the Scale to Assess Fluency

- | | |
|-----------|---|
| 1 | Find a readable text for the student, one that he or she can read with over 95% accuracy. Decide whether you want to assess the first or second reading. |
| 2 | Provide a brief, standardized introduction to the text. |
| 3 | Ask the student to read a significant portion of the text aloud; or have the student read the text once in full and then read it aloud for the second time. |
| 4 | Follow along as the student reads, using your own copy of the text, and marking errors. |
| 5 | Check the reading for accuracy—noting whether it is above 95%. |
| 6 | Use the rubric to rate the reading along the first five dimensions. |
| 7 | Make an overall assessment of the students' fluency—dimension 6 which refers to integrating the first five factors. |
| 8 | Repeat the assessment for a group of students. |
| 9 | Analyze reading fluency to determine what students are doing and not doing. |
| 10 | Plan small and large group instruction to address areas of need. |

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Fluency – Letter Recognition

Speedy Alphabet Arc

1. Provide student with an alphabet arc, a set of uppercase letters, and a timer.
2. Student sets the timer for one minute. Chooses a letter, names it and places it on the alphabet arc.
3. Continue until the timer goes off. Count how many letters were placed.
4. Repeat to increase time.

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNPO

QRSTUVWXYZ

Fluency – Letter Recognition

Speedy Alphabet Cards

1. Provide student with an alphabet cards and a timer.
2. Students places the cards in a stack and sets the timer for one minute.
3. Turn over a card, if it can be correctly identified, student places it in a discard pile. If not, the card is placed at the bottom of the stack.
4. Continue until the timer goes off. Count how many letter cards were identified.
5. Repeat to increase speed and fluency.

| | |
|----------|----------|
| A | B |
| C | D |
| E | F |
| G | H |

I**J****K****L****M****N****O****P**

Q**R****S****T****U****V****W****X**

| | |
|----------|----------|
| Y | Z |
| a | b |
| c | d |
| e | f |

g**h****i****j****k****l****m****n**

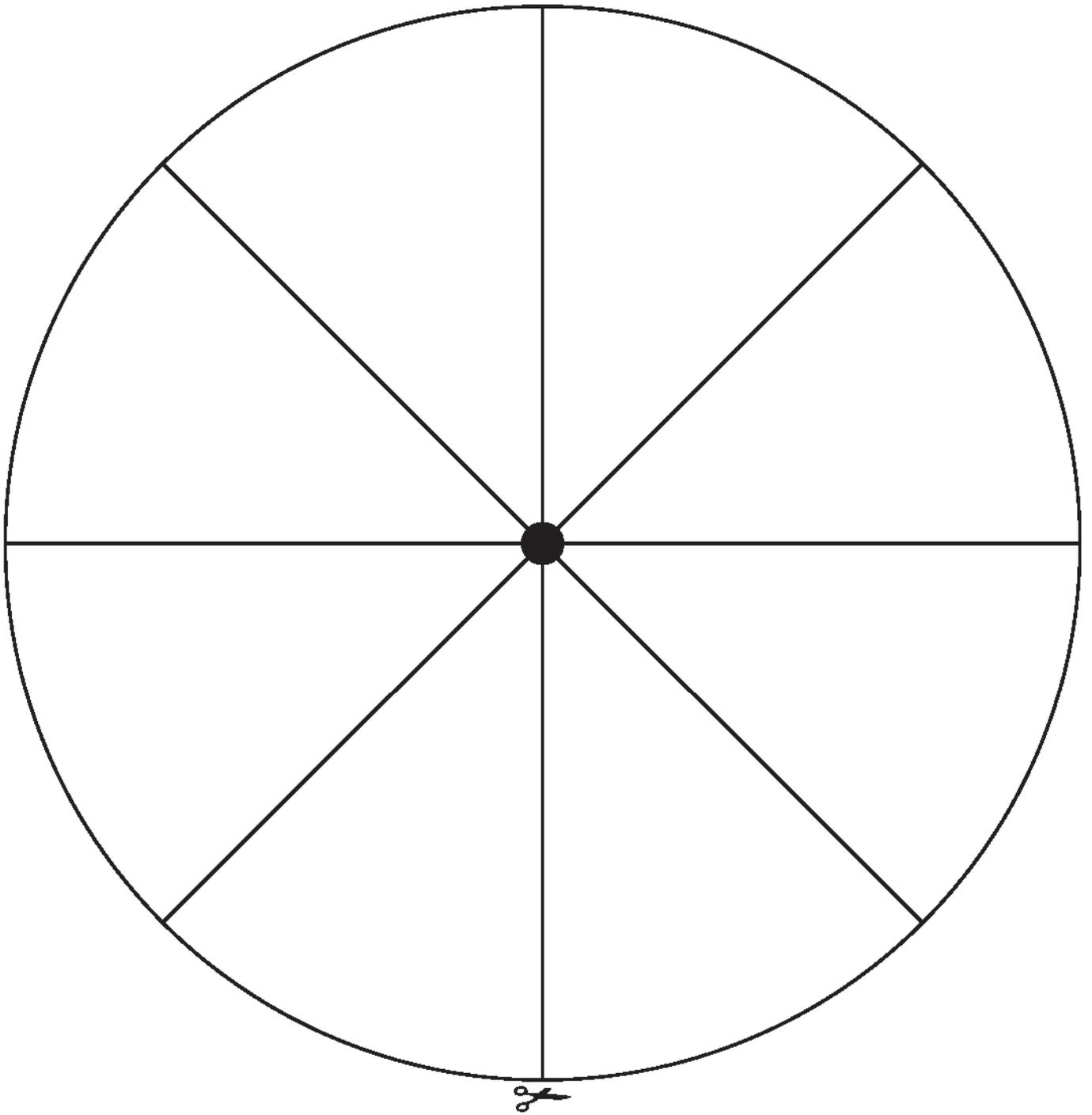
o**p****q****r****s****t****u****v**

| | |
|----------|----------|
| w | x |
| y | z |

Fluency – Letter-Sound Correspondence

Fluency Wheel

1. Provide student with letter wheel spinner (with targeted letters), cup, counters, and timer.
2. Student sets the timer for one minute, spins the spinner, says the letter sound, and puts a counter in the cup if the letter sound was known.
3. When the timer goes off, count how many letter sounds were identified. Repeat to increase speed and fluency.



Fluency – Letter-Sound Correspondence

Letter Flash

1. Provide student with upper and/or lowercase letter cards, yes and no header cards, recording sheet, and a timer.
2. Student places the letter cards face down in a stack. Place the yes and no header cards beside each other. Set the timer for one minute.
3. Student turns over a letter card, says the letter, and names its sound.
4. If the letter and sound was identified, place the card under the yes header card. If it was not identified, place it under the no header card. Continue until the timer goes off.
5. Graph the number of cards in each pile.
6. Repeat to increase speed and fluency.

Yes

No

Fluency – Words

Speedy Rime Words

1. Provide student with a word sheet, graphing recording sheet, and a timer.
2. Student sets the timer for one minute and begins reading the words on the rime sheet. Continue until timer goes off. Record the number of words read correctly.
3. Repeat to increase speed and fluency.

-at

cat

bat

hat

rat

mat

fat

-in

pin

tin

win

bin

fin

chin

-ot

dot

cot

lot

not

hot

pot

-an

pan

fan

can

man

tan

ran

-it

bit

sit

hit

fit

lit

pit

ap

cap

lap

nap

map

tap

gap

-op

hop

top

mop

pop

shop

stop

-ug

bug

hug

dug

rug

tug

jug

-ip

rip

sip

tip

hip

lip

dip

| | | | |
|-------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| 30 | | | |
| 29 | | | |
| 28 | | | |
| 27 | | | |
| 26 | | | |
| 25 | | | |
| 24 | | | |
| 23 | | | |
| 22 | | | |
| 21 | | | |
| 20 | | | |
| 19 | | | |
| 18 | | | |
| 17 | | | |
| 16 | | | |
| 15 | | | |
| 14 | | | |
| 13 | | | |
| 12 | | | |
| 11 | | | |
| 10 | | | |
| 9 | | | |
| 8 | | | |
| 7 | | | |
| 6 | | | |
| 5 | | | |
| 4 | | | |
| 3 | | | |
| 2 | | | |
| 1 | | | |
| words | 1 st try | 2 nd try | 3 rd try |

Fluency – High Frequency Words

Read it Quick

1. Provide student with a stack of targeted high frequency word cards, a recording sheet, and a timer.
2. Student places the high frequency word cards in a stack and sets the timer for one minute.
3. Turn over the first word card, if the student can read the word, place it aside. If the word cannot be read, place it under the stack.
4. Continue until the timer goes off. Count and record the number of words read correctly.
5. Repeat to increase speed and accuracy.

Words Correct Per Minute

| | |
|---------------------|------------------------|
| 1 st try | _____ words per minute |
| 2 nd try | _____ words per minute |
| 3 rd try | _____ words per minute |
| 4 th try | _____ words per minute |
| 5 th try | _____ words per minute |

Fluency – Reading

Tape-Assisted Reading

1. Provide student a book at their independent or instructional reading level and a tape recording of the book.
2. For the first reading, student listens to the story, pointing to each word as the reader reads it.
3. Next, the student tries to read with the tape. Reading along with the tape should continue until the student can read the book independently, without the support of the tape.

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